STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE VEDAS AND VEDIC SOCIETY

It is difficult to present a comprehensive view on Hinduism upon a given subject or issue. Hinduism is not a religion, but a league of religions presenting different - often contradictory - views, set of beliefs and norms. It has a great number of books recognized as scriptures, which individually or collectively - as the case may be, claim the authority over the lives of its adherents. Moreover, there is a long history of traditions, conventions, habits and customs, coming down from over 4000 years that also have to be taken into consideration before taking a definite view of the things so important. This does not make the task so easy, as one may like to think, and acceptable to one and all. One can only be selective and be conscious of its limitation.

Secondly, Hinduism is a social structure. Almost all inhabitants of India, irrespective of their religious/racial affiliations, are deeply structured by the social structures and norms of the Hinduism. Caste is the most explicit example of the penetration of Hindu social structures into the social systems of other religious communities, including Christianity; so also the position of women.

Thirdly, Hinduism is a culture, and as such, a civilization that has a long and chequered history. Its languages, literature, architecture, arts, dance and traditional ways are unique and preserved almost into original and modern forms - both at the same time. Its philosophy of life - acceptance of pluralisms as unity in diversity - has been able to absorb and transformed almost all that came into its contact.

In the context of resurgence of the doctrine of Hindutva, one needs to be very clear in his understanding, and application, of the term, Hinduism. A cautious approach to the issues and problems may be more helpful than the syncretistic-synthetic one.

In presenting this paper, I would like to limit myself only to the position and status of women in the Vedic society as represented in the Vedic literature. This limitation in scope does not, in any way, bar our vision to their status in the totality of Hinduism, since it is guided, directed and decided by the Vedic laws/injunctions, practices and references.

The contents of the paper, and reflections, are presented with a view to initiate valuable interaction in discussions, with the hope to suggest ways and means for correction in men's attitude towards his counterpart-in-creation. I have refrained myself from passing judgements either my own or other scholars, and have presented the case from the Vedic text itself, in order to be objective.

Introduction

The society of the Vedic Aryans is known to us through a mass of literature called Vedas. The other sources to know about them, their culture, their religion, social structure, customs and traditions are found in the Sanskrit literature, such as Sutras, Epics, Classical literature, Philosophico-theological treatise and Buddhist and Jain canons.
There are certain limitations in getting comprehensive view of the status of women in Vedic society as a whole from the Vedic literature. Firstly, they are religious in nature, not a source book of history or sociology. There are not many direct evidence of contemporary life in the Vedic literature. Secondly, the correct and exact date of the different Vedic text is difficult to assign as they were composed and handed down orally and the written form came very late in time. The gap is more than thousand years between this transition, which has allowed much transformation, addition and interpolation, even some editorial clipping too. Thirdly, the Vedic literature presents us the religion of the upper class of people - both men and women. Mere mention of some names does not warrant a general conclusion of availability of education to all female child irrespective of their classes in the Vedic society. Lastly, the subject matter of Vedic prayer has individual reference, which can not strictly be applied to the society as a whole. One seer may pray for sons, another daughters and sons, while the third only for daughters. In such a situation, conclusion with regard to the importance of any one of them may only have a matter of personal choice, hence biased.

**Patriarchal Traits**

The Vedic society was patriarchal society in its composition at family level as well as at the structure of societal governance. The family was undivided and headed by the father. It is evident from the number of prayers for the birth of sons - brave worthy and religious. The reasons for such a preference were that he would perform religious rights to the ancestors; he is a boat to salvation. This preference resulted into a kind of unhappiness at the birth of a female child and prayers for the boys here and girls elsewhere. The reason is found in the hope that boy brings for the family in contrast to the trouble and misery brought by the female child. Atharveda contains charms and rituals to ensure the birth of a son in preference to that of a daughter.

This naturally led to the degradation of the status of female in family and society. Aitereya Brahman of Sam Veda places sister next to the wife of her brother, making her inferior to that of a married woman from other family. It means that female child has an inferior existence in her own home though born from the same mother as his brother. No doubt, the couple ceases to recite the Rigvedic prayers for many sons, daughters and long life. The ritual for ensuring the birth of a scholarly daughter, as recommended in the Brahunaranyaka Upanishad even lost its name and lost its popularity to the Purusavana, prescribed for the birth of a son.

**Brahmacharya**

Even in such a state of mind just setting upon, there are references that indicate the equal social and religious status that was available to the boys and girls in the Vedic society. The girls were spending early years in Brahmacharya ashram as indicated in Atharvaveda (XI.5.18). The Taittiriya Brahmana makes upanayana sacrament mandatory for a women, non performance of which leads to the automatic lowering of her status to that of a Shudra.
Even after marriage they can continue their studies. This is indicated by the words \textit{Sadyodvahas} for those pursuing studies after marriage and \textit{Brahmavadini}, for those engaged in the life long studies. Many women are called \textit{Rishi} (Seer) and Brahmavadins (Knower of the Ultimate), and the composed of Vedic hymns. The names of Apala\textsuperscript{x}, Vishvavara\textsuperscript{xi}, Lopamudra\textsuperscript{xii}, Ghosha\textsuperscript{xiii}, Indrani\textsuperscript{xiv} and Shachi\textsuperscript{xv} are clearly mentioned as the seers of the Mantra, which others, such as Kakhivati, Surya-Savitri, Shrudha Kamayani, Shrdarajmi and Urvashi are attributed with the hymns.\textsuperscript{xvi} The ancient upanisads - Chhandogya and Buhadaranya - provides women of any caste an opportunity to study the Vedas and mentioned female \textit{rishis} such as Gargi and Maitreyi.\textsuperscript{xvii}

\textbf{Grahasth}

The marriage and family life as presented in the Vedas shows a very high degree of development. It represent a social and religious institution, most important and sacrosanct. For Rigveda, marriage is necessary for becoming a house-holder, performing sacrifices and procreation.\textsuperscript{xviii} Aitereya Brahmana takes away the right of completion from one who is not married\textsuperscript{xix}. It is regarded as a sacred religious union brought about by divine dispensation and never considered as a contract. The marriage is indissoluble and places husband and wife on equal footing and provides an acceptable ground for lasting mutual loving relationship.\textsuperscript{xx} It is in this aspect of marriage and married life that the revelation of status of women in idealized Hindu family and society takes place.

The tradition of child marriage cannot be traced to the Vedas. The marriage hymn in Rig Veda\textsuperscript{xxi} shows that brides are fully matured and quite grown up at the time of marriage. The parting words of parents to the bride are "go to the house to be a mistress there 'and' rule over all the members of the family as ocean rules over all the rivers", which can only be spoken to an adult and mature women as the bride.

Three forms of marriage, though not mentioned by name as later writers did, can be inferred from various hymns of the Vedas. They are: \textit{Kshatra/Rakshasa} marriage in which the victor carries away the bride and marries here. This is mentioned in Rigveda\textsuperscript{xxii} where Vimada is described as having won his bride in battle. \textit{Svayamvara} type of marriage allows the bride to choose her own partner in life. This form is inferred from the Rigvedic hymn of marriage.\textsuperscript{xxiii} Surya married Ashrins by such a choice. \textit{Prajapatya} is the third type of marriage, reference of which we find in Rigveda\textsuperscript{xxiv} with elaborate rituals. In this form of marriage, which one can still observe at any Hindu marriage, daughter is offered by the father to the bridegroom with an injunction that they should be always inseparable companions in the discharge of their religious duties.

It is, however, to be noted that the custom of bride purchase was known in Vedic times, though not held in high esteem. The son-in-law in such cases was described as \textit{Vijamata}, disreputable son-in-law as Rig Veda records.\textsuperscript{xxv}
Mono and/Polygamy
The Vedas present a society in which monogamy was generally and normally practiced. The Rigvedic marriage rituals\textsuperscript{xxvi} does not provide for the association of more than one wife in normal sacrifice. Yet there are instances where polygamy is distinctly recorded. The rich, kings and ruling section of the society were practicing polygamy.\textsuperscript{xxvii} Aitereya Brahman\textsuperscript{xxviii} admits that a man can have more than one wife. The Atharveda\textsuperscript{xxix} prescribes a number of charms to enable the wife to monopolize the love of the common husband. The famous philosopher of Brahadaranyakya Upanishad Yajnavalkya had two wives indicating the acceptance of polygamy by the society\textsuperscript{xxx}

Polyandry
One can only grudgingly admit that there are few references of polyandry in the Vedas. In the marriage hymn of Rigveda\textsuperscript{xxx}, Surya is married to Aswins. The marriage of Rudasi with Maruts is also find place in it.\textsuperscript{xxxii} There are some passages in which the wife is mentioned in connection with husband in plural.\textsuperscript{xxxiii} It is interesting to note that later Vedic literature do not approve polyandry though legalize the polygamy.\textsuperscript{xxiv}

Widow Marriage
As in the case of a widower, the widows are allowed to marry again. It may sound strange, but the funeral hymn in Vedas exhorts widow to marry the one who holds her hand is willing to marry.\textsuperscript{xxv} It also shows that the brother of the deceased took charge of the widow. Atharveda too mentions of women marrying second time.\textsuperscript{xxxvi} The passages do not suggest that the women should marry only her brother-in-law.\textsuperscript{xxxvii}

Sati
Atharvaveda\textsuperscript{xxxviii}, however, shows a strange funeral ritual of the Vedic age, which has preserved some formalities similar to the custom of Sati. It depicts a widow lying by the side of her husband's corpse on the funeral pyre and being asked to come down. A prayer was offered that she should lead a prosperous life, enjoying the bliss of children and wealth. The passage is open for interpretation either way.

Niyog/Levirate
Women’s right to have children was granted by the practice of Niyoga/Levirate.\textsuperscript{xxix} As there are few instances of remarriage of widows, and in the absence of clear injunction of widow-marriages, one can safely assume that this practice was more popular than remarriages.

Religious and Social life of Women
The Vedic society was quite free and did not pose much restriction upon the free movement of their women. They were educated along with boys of their own age, free to move with them,
approach them for marriages and took part in sports and extra curricular activities, of course within the accepted norms and customs of the society. We do not come across the system of purdah in the Vedic society. Even the life after marriage does not change much in their social interaction. The marriage hymn itself requires the bride to be shown to all the assembled guests at the end of the marriage rituals. The practice still continues in Hindu marriages. It is also hoped that the bride will be able to speak with composure in public assemblies down to her old age. The presence of ladies in social and public gathering therefore, was a normal feature in Vedic time. They were quite free to associate themselves with others on the occasion of festivals and rejoicing.

The Vedic Aryans were mostly occupied in military activities as they were engaged in the task of carving a homeland for themselves. They had, therefore, to rely upon a greater degree of cooperation from their women folk. Women are depicted in Vedic literature as taking part in agriculture and in manufacture of bows, arrows and other war materials. They were also engaged in weaving cloth, dyeing, embroidery and basket-making. They were also engaged in teaching, independent of their man-counterpart. The cultivation of fine arts like music, dancing and painting was the domain of the women only. Musical reciting of the Sama-hymns was the special function of ladies.

The Vedas regard women as untouchable during her monthly period. This temporary impurity is assigned to their taking over from India one third of the sin of Brahmana murder, which he incurred when he killed Vritra. Child bearing is regarded as the special function of women, and evil spirits are believed to be very of anxious to visit them during their periods to prevent conception. They may also harm her husband. One stanza in Vedic hymn prays that the bride should have no evil eye and hopes that she would not be the cause of the sudden death of her husband. During the time of confinement, the women are regarded as impure as the phenomenon of menstruation is considered to be repeated at the child birth.

Apart from this, women are not regarded as impure. There is a ceremony to purify a women before her participation in Vedic sacrifice. There is nothing special about it, as similar purification has been prescribed for men also. Women enjoyed all religious rights and privileges which men possessed. Vedic education, Mantra writing, Reciting of mantras, Vedic sacrifice, Vedic samskaras. The women were not an impediment in the path of religion; her presence and cooperation is absolutely necessary in religious rites and ceremonies. This naturally increases her religious value: Man is not a spiritual whole unless accompanied by his wife, gods do not accept the oblations offered by a bachelor, husband alone cannot go to heaven. A son is indispensable for spiritual well-being in life to come. These circumstances are enough to ensure women a religious status as high as that of her husband.

It is interesting to note that they had their own hut in sacrificial compound and her own cow to provide milk for sacrifice. She too had a special upanayana on the occasion of some sacrifices. Chanting of mantra from Samaveda was her exclusive right. One of the women,
Indrani, claims that she had started some rites and rituals. Many of them, as earlier pointed out, were the seers and authors of the Vedic hymns. Many religious practices and rituals could survive because they were preserved and practiced by the women.

**Proprietary right of women**

In early times, proprietary rights were hardly recognized in almost all civilizations. In early Vedic time, the case was not different: they were regarded as chattel. They were given away as gifts as none appear from several hymns, which glorify the gifts of generous donors. In the famous gambling hymn of Rigveda we find the wife being staked away by the husband. However, women have been given certain rights over the material possession under Vedic law. They can be classified as follows.

1. **Women's right to property vis-a-vis her husband.**
2. **Stridhana**
3. The right of inheritance

**Women's right to property vis-à-vis her husband**

As per the marriage hymn of Rigveda, the wife is the co-owner of the family property along with her husband. The husband takes a vow at the time of marriage that the rights and interests of his wife in economic matters shall not be transgressed. But this concept of joint property of wife and husband soon became a legal fiction during the Vedic period itself as expressed in the famous gambling hymn, neutralizing such a noble concept.

**Stridhan**

It is difficult to define Stridhan. The term is used to denote property over which women are allowed to have their own absolute right in normal times. Hindu society has not been willing to invest the wife with full or exclusive ownership right over immovable property. But far as movable property like ornaments, jewellery, costly apparel etc are concerned, women's right to own it is recognized from a very early date. This, in essence, is stridhan. Stridhan has origin in a practice of marriage by paying bride-price (Shulka). The practice is non-Vedic, but not unknown to the Vedic people, who held this practice in low esteem. Rigveda describes the son-in-law in such cases as a Vijamata, disreputable son-in-law. Even this custom was not Vedic, it seems to have been making room for itself, since there was a practice of Parinahya, whereby the bride used to receive some wedding gifts. The term denotes these gifts, which the Vedic text declares to be the sole property of the bride. This may be the original Vedic practice as the superstition of using women's personal property still persists in Hindu Society. Later law-makers have taken much trouble in defining and enacting satisfactory codes, as Vedic literature is silent on the issue of the disposal of Stridhan.
The right of inheritance

The view that women have no right of inheritance is expressed in many places in the Vedas.\textsuperscript{lxii} The developing concept of Stridhana during this period shows that women could normally get property only by way of gifts from their relations at or subsequent to their marriage. Daughter’s case was different than the wife or the widow. As there was a strong prejudice against adopting a son in the Veda itself\textsuperscript{lxiii}, it was natural that a brother-less daughter will be the first to get her right of inheritance.\textsuperscript{lxiv} It may sound strange to us now that a brother-less women found it difficult to marry and often had to remain spinster, as not many were willing to allow their first born son to revert back to the families of their maternal grand-father.\textsuperscript{lxv} A special word, Putrika, is coined for such a purpose. Some claims that Vedas do not lay down any rule unfavorable to the succession of women and find some support in the text.\textsuperscript{lxvi} Yet the general bias remains against the women members within the family, even when she remains unmarried and claims her share in patriarchy.\textsuperscript{lxvii} Rigveda advises the brother not to give any share to his sister; she is after all to migrate to a different family.\textsuperscript{lxviii} Generally speaking, daughters - married or unmarried, do not have any right to inherit or share in patrimony. It is interesting to note that there are references of partition of family inheritance by the father during his life time in the Vedic literature.\textsuperscript{lxix} However, it is not clear whether women used to get a share.

General attitude towards Women

The best possible way to ascertain the attitude of Vedic society towards women may to look for the instances where women are overtaken by misfortune of falling into unfortunate situation. Such a situation may give us, glimpses into the genuineness of society's sympathy towards the weaker sex. It also enables us to find out how far man is prepared to rise above the prejudices of his gender and judge the women by an equitable standard. Hindu society, as any other society, has laid down a much higher standard of sexual morality for women than men and has framed rules which are harsh and unsympathetic to them. The Vedic thinker, however, have shown a fair amount of sympathy and consideration towards the lapses of women from the marriage vows. They were allowed to take part even in religious service, provided they confess their error.\textsuperscript{lx} Being a fighting race and trying to establish their foot-hold in the region, yet they regarded killing of women a very disgraceful offence. We, therefore find in injunction in Rig Veda that a woman ought not to be killed.\textsuperscript{lxii} This dictum is followed in letter and spirit through out the history and literature in India. The women as Dancers and Courtesan do not seem to have respect of the people as it is indicated in the Vedas.\textsuperscript{lxiii} The profession of prostitution is mentioned in the Vedas and the prostitute is termed as Sadharini (commoner). The society treated them with scant regard, even though many has acquired name and fame on account of their learning in literature and music, and have cultivated and preserved fine arts and dance.
The Rigveda, in a passage, present them on those willing to break away long and established bond even on some flimsy grounds.\textsuperscript{lxxiv}

**Un-charitable remarks against women**

One cannot deny the fact that the Vedic literature do contain some remarks and observations which are hurtful and degrade the very personality of women as such apart from lowering her status. One cannot, however, take refuse, in generalizing that such remarks are common in world religion and literature and throw the blame to a few men in the throes of bitter disappointment. Mere presence of them makes them gospel truth that warrant a change in attitude.

Rigveda states that women are very fickle by nature.\textsuperscript{lxv} In another passage quotes Indra's observation that women cannot control themselves.\textsuperscript{lxvi} Satpath Brahmana, on the other hand, has its own observation and holds that women can easily be won over by one who is fair in form and expert in singing and dancing.\textsuperscript{lxvii} Such as these were enough for the later law-givers to shackle the women to the best of their legal genius in their respective regions and times.

**Points to ponder**

The picture which is attempted here to present, may not be exhaustive, but clear enough to give us some ideas about the status of women and her position in the Vedas and Vedic society. Aryans considered themselves 'cultural ones' and other un-cultured. How far this egoistic subjective one-sided, boastful, tinted with superiority complex, claim can be justified has been a subject of fiercely argued, intellectual and academic exercise. The result of such an exercise has always been colored by the school of thought to whom one belongs.

The statues of the women, in Vedic society, are assigned only when she attains marriageable age and establishes a home through marriage. It is at this time, the man accept her as the joint partner of his house-hold, in presence of his kith and kin, invoking the witness of the super-natural through a ceremony which is regarded as sacramental. This is repeated for thousands of years by everyone who is married according to Hindu marriage sacraments and imbibed in those who belonged to that tradition, but it has seldom been successful in providing the ideal state of joint-partnership in the family situation in India. The theory of joint-partnership needs to be refocused, revived and expanded to include of women as such, not merely a wife - in order to emphasize and regain the rightful place for the women in the man made society.

The Vedic society was definitely a male dominated society, generally known as patriarchy. It has been in the process of being judged and condemned in last few years, by the criteria developed by the sociologist and feminists. I humbly wish to point out that there is a need to examine patriarchy not as a system but as a trust bestowed by the society upon almost half of its members. Gandhian idea of trusteeship, developed upon Ruskin's *Unto the Last*, may have some common point of reference for critical analysis and in chalkling out a proper course of action in building up the society (Kingdom??) of God. Replacing one by the other may be an option, but may not be the best. I can say so, after living some years in a matriarchal society in the north-east.
The concept of Stridhan is another insight that needs a proper scrutiny and re-orientation as it has fallen into the wrong hands of law-givers and legal luminaries for implications and interpretations. Its point of reference is the value, worth and dignity of woman-hood rather than the material, physical and inferiority of an individual woman. It is the most heinous crime against woman-hood that in the name of stridhan, she was sold and brought; deprived of her own free and independent existence and deprived of her own part of humanity. Stridhan is that which essentially belongs to her; that essentiality has to be restored. The task of theologians and activists is clear now, more than ever in the past; they have to rewrite the theology and restore the original image. We need Drista (visionary), not Jnata (knower). All social codes, laws, customs and traditions derive its strength from religious scriptures as source. Theologians are expected to provide hermeneutical principles for the decoding of the codes.

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WOMEN IN MANU

Manu and Manusmrti are the two words that invoke mixed feelings. There are some who would like to perform the funeral rite for the man and his work as many times as possible, while other would like to make it the centre of Hindutva, relying point on matters of religious, social and legal importance. The rise of Dalit movements in India has one important point to make: remove everything that is related to Manu. Its consequences we have been watching with concern for the last few years as they have disturbed the very foundation of social, religious and political life of the Hindu orthodoxy. Women's voice of protest has not been so loud, nor their organizations that political clout, though, as we shall see, they have much to complain about for their present state of affairs which has been sustained mainly by the laws of Manu.

Manu and Manusmrti

If mere mention of the name is the criteria to place a man in his historical context then Manu may be a mythical/historical person. He is mentioned in the Vedas itself and is described as the law-giver (1). The later commentators and law-givers such as Yaska (2), Baudhayana (3), Apastamha (4), Samkara (5), often quote him and his works. There is no doubt about the antiquity of the name, but we do not know the time of the man who was really the author of the work. Manusmrti has been placed between 200BC - 200 AD by the scholars, rather a very long time for a person to exist in his earthly life.

However this time in the history of the Indian nation is of permanent importance. It was the time of the rise and decline of Buddhism as religion and political power, decline of Vedic religion and its ascendancy through a newer form, great Indian empires of Ashoka, Mauryan, Gupta; influx of groups from central and western Asia, Greek invasion development of Sanskrit and its literature, and the evolution of great Indian culture are not all but few to mention. Manu's work codifies, enacts and creates the laws on the authority of the supernatural to give direction, stability and sanctity of human institutions of his times, and in process, beyond his own time. Manusmrti, therefore is a mirror of the society in its past, present and future times, and therefore can he held responsible for the condition of anyone/anything in the present Hindu/Indian society, including women and Dalits. Its all-pervasive authority derives its strength from the sacred and secular powers of times, including our own.

Manu, Manusmrti and Women

The position and status of women can be ascertained from the myths, lore, traditions, customs and laws that a civilization/nation/community evolves during its long history of existence. It is in the social and religious framework that we find the truest picture of the placement of an individual or institution in any culture and civilization. Many represent the continuity from the past, to the present of his own as well as ours, making it impossible for us to ignore him and his
codes. Manusmrti can give us a fair amount of information about the position of women in the Vedic times as well as in the early Christian era and offer some insights on the present state of affairs in the life of women in our times.

Manu does not regard women as necessary evil, but as the prime factor in man's life. (6) She is not inferior to man in any respect. She is as much part of the creator as man is; for He divided himself into two parts - one being male and the other female - to imitate the creation. (7) He sees women as a component part of man, in the manner man is a component part of women, and together they make a complete whole. (8) At the sometime, Manu sees the hand of God in allotting women a love for bed, chair and ornaments, physical desires, anger, dishonesty, malice and bad conduct. (9) He finds them weak enough to fall into falsehood. (10) He, therefore, does not consider the parts of the divine equal, though they are one. (11) So the no equal part needs protection, which should be provided but not forced upon against her will. (12)

We now have a fair idea of Manu's views on women: she is a creation of God, as man too is; the male and female created by the divine from his own body divided into two equal parts; but the female part is weaker, hence needs protection. Let us look into other aspects of womanhood in the light of Manu's perception. These aspects are:

a. Daughter/Maiden
b. Wife
c. Widow
d. Mother
e. Others

**Daughter/Maiden**

Contrary to the Vedic preference to a male progeny, Manu does not show any favour to either. He is interested in the increase of progeny in general and not of sons only. He therefore uses a moral, *santati*, denoting a child without mentioning the gender, (13) in place of definite and indicative word. *Putra* (Son) for him son and daughter are equal, (14) which should have been able to remove the social prejudice against a female child by advising people to treat daughters with tenderness, and parents not to enter into argument with them. (15) They should be well-kept, well-dressed and well-ornamented in her own house as well as in her-in-laws house. Her unhappiness and dishonor will only be at the loss of the sanctity of the house and its ruin. (16) Manu gives a special place and preference to the daughters. The elder sister gets preference in marriage first. The man who marries a girl, whose elder sister is yet married, is considered to be an undignified man. (17) He gives instruction that unmarried girls should be given preference over the Brahmans at the feeding on ceremonial occasions, making them no way less auspicious than them. (18) He makes it mandatory to invite the daughter, her husbands and son at *Shraddha* ceremony and assigns a very high place of honour to the son of the daughter. (19)

According to Manu, father is the real guardian and protector of the daughter as long as she is not married. (20) It is his duty to arrange for her marriage to the deserving groom at the right age,
otherwise he is looked with contempt. (21) In his anxiety to secure a suitable person, he even argues for pure-puberty marriages and keeping them un-married if that is not the case. (22) His over-action in keeping them unmarried for life is diluted by his permission to let them choose their own groom after waiting for three years; but then, he makes them responsible to make the choice within his own caste equal rank and absolves them from any sin or guilt. (23) But his disapproval of such marriages are quite evident as he deprives them the right of stridhan in such cases of self choice. (24) Virginity and chastity is associated with the dignity, honour and reputation of the maidens in the Hindu society. In the laws of Manu, the personal right of a woman not to be defamed is subject to the limitation that it is not infringed by a truthful implication. He recommends a heavy fine to a man who defames a maiden unwarrantedly. (25) At the same time, he denies religious marriage sacrament to such females who have lost their virginity. (26) But he shown his leniency towards those who do not conceal the truth regarding the physical and moral defects from the bridal family. (27) Manu does not tolerate any fraud in marriage relationship and makes it null and void if so proved, making provision for the punishment to the party concerned.

In dealing with laws against adultery, Manu is very sympathetic and lenient towards maidens. If the maiden is unwilling, the crime is serious enough for death penalty, but she is a willing partner, it is not so serious, and she is punished with confinement in her home. (29) Punishment for minor cases involves physical punishment and fine. (30) Manu treats lesbian relationship as criminal offence and provides punishment, fine and lashes for the maidens; public insult for the married women. (31) Pollution of a maiden is considered by Manu, a criminal offence and he deals with it from the legal social, and religious stand point. He considers the offender as an outcaste (apankleya) and prescribes expiratory rites. (32) Manu places restriction upon women in case of sacraments performed by them, or for them: though all the sacraments should be performed for them, but without mantras (33) and with this, he takes away their right of Upnanayan and merges with the marriage in case of women. (34) It is strange that such injunctions are made against those who he considers auspicious and blessed so much so that he advises parents not to name them with inauspicious and unacceptable names. (35) Manu does not give any right to daughter over the paternal property after the death of her parents, through the sons are given equal shares, only after the death of both of them. (36) He however, accepts the inheritance of a brother-less daughter and a share in mother's property. (37) He only exerts moral pressure upon brothers to give one fourth of their share to the unmarried sisters by threatening excommunication. (38) In case of mother's property, Manu provides equal share to her children, sons and daughter, irrespective of their marital status. (39) He even allows grand daughters a share in maternal grandmother's property, not as a legal right but a token of her love and affection. (40)
In the context of inheritance for a father without a son, Manu recognizes daughter as equal to a son, and hence the heir of her father's property. (41) But he prefers daughter's son as he considers him to be proper heir with respect to worldly matters and sacred duties, the one who can perform the last rites of his father, mother and grand parents. (42) In the ultimate analysis, the sum and substance of the laws governing the inheritance of a man who does not have male off-spring, the right of inheritance belongs to a son who may not be his own, and never to his female off-spring. Mother's personal belongings and Stridhan belongs to the unmarried daughters alone. (44)

**Wife**

Manu has very high regards for married and family life and places women at the centre of men's life, equating her with the goddess of prosperity. (45) He regards the wife as the half of her husband, and man incomplete without the company of his wife. (46) The unity between husband and wife is of a permanent nature, which is ordained and established by the creator himself. (47) She is not purchased from the market like cattle and gold; she is a gift from gods as a result of man's meritorious works. (48)

Her personhood is held in high esteem by Manu: court of law requires man to touch the head of his wife and take oath; defamation of her results a heavy fine; she cannot be deserted unless found guilty of crime against the castes, otherwise husband is fined; husband cannot exchange hard words to her. (49) He, however, recognizes a fair amount of reciprocity between husband and wife, which he appreciate, as well as prescribes punishments for the lapses: husband acquires the qualities of her husband as does the river those of the sea; the husband suffers for the sins of his wife and vice-versa; the ruler should not exempt from punishment even the wife of the accused. (50)

Mutual fidelity till death, according to Manu, is the dharma for the husband and wife. (51) They are created to procreate and perform religious rites together. (52)

Manu required wife to serve obey and honor her husband and never do anything that might displease him whether he is alive or dead. (53) He commands the faithful wife to worship her husband as a god, even if he is virtue-less, seeks pleasure elsewhere, has no good qualities. The centre of her sacrifice, vow, fast must be the husband. The reason for such devotion is the happiness that she receives from him in this world and the next for this devoted service; he assumes her exaltation in heaven. (53) Her duty is to produce children; hence she should always keep her face smiling and radiant with beauty, in order to attract her husband. She should be clever in managing her household affairs. She should avoid alcohol, association with wicked people separation from husband, rambling about, sleeping at unusual hours, and living in other's houses, for they are the causes of the ruin of a woman. (55) Manu required women not to seek independence; hence, in her youth as married women should be under the control of her husband and must not seek separation from him. In doing so, she saves both the families from dishonor. (56) Manu takes away their independence, liberty and freedom from women as such by laying
down a general principle that nothing must be done independently by her, even in her own house. (57)

There are certain rights that a woman enjoys as the wife. The first and foremost is her participation in the religious activities of her husband, of course without the mantras. (58) But this rite is received only for the savarna wife - the wife of equal caste and by no means a wife of a different caste. (59) For this reason, he ordains that a twice-born (Dvija) man, versed in the sacred law, shall burn the dead body of the wife of equal caste with the sacred fires, and marry again to kindle the fire anew. (60) Partiality and injustice to the women-folk and caste bias of Manu the law-giver is quite evident here. Manu stamps out any rebellious attitude of women with his assertion that there are no separate sacrifices for women independent of her husband, nor fast without his consent. (61) To force his views, he prohibits Brahmana to attend a feast given on the occasion of the sacrifice performed by a woman. (62)

Manu holds husband responsible for the support of his devoted and faithful wife, as a tribute to gods, who has given her to him. (63) One can mark the word Sadhvi - faithful and devoted as a condition for the support though the marriage rite provides unconditional support. She cannot just be cast off unless proved guilty of causing loss of caste. (64) Even an exceeding corrupt wife is allowed by Manu to staff in her house, confined and compelled to perform penance. (65) Husband has to make provision for the maintenance for his wife. He reminds the husband that even a virtuous wife may be corrupted is she is not allowed at least minimum subsistence. (66)

It is the duty of the husband even if he is weak, to provide protection to his wife. (67) This protection has different meanings and reasons for money. The protection almost means to guard, to keep an eye and to imprisonment in the context of women. The reasons which one described by Manu are to preserve the purity of his offspring character of all concerned and the Dharma. (68) Husband has to guard his wife in order to be sure that she conceives from him only. (69) In yet another reason, law-giver himself charges women of adulterers in nature as they do not come for beauty, nor age, and give themselves to any man. Through their passion for men, through their unstable temper, through their natural heartlessness, they become dislodged to their husband. (70) He absolves himself by pointing out that this is inherent in nature, for the creator allotted to women a love of bed, of comfortable sitting place, of ornaments, passion, anger, dishonesty, malice and bad conduct. (71) Manu is a step forward from Adam; instead of blaming women, he blames the creator.

Manu is conscious of the fact that it is neither helpful nor advisable to apply force in guarding wives nor possible to arrange a security set for that purpose. He prefers brain washing and suggests inculcating the importance of chastity in their mind so that they may be their own guards. (72) They should be kept away from drinking, associating with wicked people, tendency to be away from the husband, gambling, sleeping and residing at other's houses, as they corrupt her mind. (73) Thirdly she should be kept busy in management of the household affairs, so that she does not have any time to think or do any undesirable or shameful act. (74)
Conjugal relationship as considered by Manu, is a religious duty because through this alone a son is born to provide spiritual benefit to the family. (75) He has some days to suggest which results in the conception of a male child and also days to avoid for they result in female child. (76) Manu is very particular about the fact that one should be very understanding of women in her period and should avoid physical relationship. To make them understand, he emphasizes the evil/good consequences of having/not having physical relation with his wife with the loss/gain of wisdom, energy, strength, sight and vitality. (77) He gives such a man credit and honour of a brahmachari. (78) He applies the laws of touchability/un-touchability (purity/impurity) in case of women in period. (79)

Manu provides the laws taking away the conjugal rights of a woman and giving it to another and taken by a man. He allows super-cession only on two conditions: the wife is not virtuous and she is not endowed with offspring. Another wife may, at anytime supercede the one who drinks alcohol, is of bad character, rebellious, diseased, mischievous or wasteful. (80) He is a bit careful about the one who is not endowed with off-spring; therefore allows super-cession in the eight year for the barren wife; in the tenth, whose children die off; in the eleventh, who is bearing daughters only; but immediately the one who take harshly. (81) The concern of having son is so great that even a good matured and virtuous, but sickly wife, is not spared from super-cession, with her own consent and without disgrace. (82) Surely not a good way to show generosity in maltreatment of a helpless wife. It is natural that a wrong wife may protest, but Manu does not allow her that right and suggest her immediate confinement or abandonment from the family. (83)

Manusmrti coins a technical term Adhivedana for super-cession. There is a difference in super-cession. There is a difference in super-cession and polygamy. In polygamy, all the wives could enjoy the conjugal rights, but in the case of super-cession conjugal rights of the superseded wife are taken away and bestowed upon the other. She, however, continues to live in the same family. Marriage in Vedas and Vedic society cannot be dissolved as it is considered a sacrament. Manu too does not allow divorce at all, and observes that neither by sale nor by repudiation is a wife released from her husband, (84) let their mutual fidelity continue until death; (85) wife is a gift from God and not something he got from his will, as such he should support her as a gratitude to gods. Manu does not give any right to husband of a crime causing lose of caste; and even if she is an outcaste, she is not to be cast off, but to undergo the penance. (87) A misbehaving wife can be deprived of her property and cohabitation with her husband; where as a wife who shows disrespect to an addicted, drunkard or diseased husband can be deserted for three months and be deprived of her ornaments and furniture. (88) But Manu spares a wife who respects to a husband who is mad, outcaste, eunuch or afflicted with incurable diseases from any punishment. (89) Manu does not allow to caste off an adulterous wife providing only confinement and penance. (90) She could be put to death by the King, but could not be abandoned by her husband. (91) Conversely, the wife too has no right to abandon her husband and take to another. (92)
Manu denounces in strongest possible terms, adulterous relations with other's wife and prescribes heavy punishment - corporeal as well as banishment. (93) He argues that adultery causes mixture of castes and the destruction of Dharma, hence heavy punishment is justified. (94) Even talking with other's wife with no proper justification leads to a penalty (95) and considered to be an adulterous act. (96) Manu prescribes the punishment of death in such cases to all except the Brahmin. (97). The laws of Manu do not protect the wives of actors and singers as he considers them involved in adulterous relationship. (98) He punishes man involved in such cases, or female slaves, with female ascetics lightly. (99)

Manu's attitude towards erring wife is far more sympathetic than towards men. In most cases of adultery the wife is neither given legal punishment nor is she driven out of the husband in the laws of Manu, which recommend religious penance and confinement in her house. (100) It is in the rare case of an audacious wife, Manu advise the King to let her devoured by dogs in a public place. (101)

With regards to property, Manu does not allow any share to the wife: wife, son and slave are declared to have no property and the wealth they earn goes to him to whom they belong. (102)

But what really belongs to her is Stridhana. After the death of mother, this goes to the children. (104) If she was childless, and was married by the condemned form of marriage (Asura, Paisacha, Raksasa), it is returned to her family. (105) It is only in the case of five recognized marriage (Brahma, Daiva, Prajapatiya, Arsa) that the property remained with her husband. (106) It is strange that Manu does not give her any specific powers regarding the sale or gift of their own Stridhana. She cannot spend anything from it without the sanction of her husband. (107) It does not mean that he has right over it. He can only temporary seize her property as a disciplinary measure if she is inimical towards him. (108) If the relatives of her husband try to use her property, Manu ordains their punishment as thieves, and considers their action a sin that leads them to hell. (109)

**Widows:**

According to Manu, the union between the man and the women performed in front of the sacred fire and according to the accepted form of marriage is indissoluble and subsists even After the death of one of the partners. Of course this mutual fidelity is most applicable in the case of women, she is expected not to do anything that displeases him whether he is alive or dead and be patient of hardship, self-controlled and chaste. (110) He does not recommend that the widow should die with her husband, but he expects her to live, a life of self-negation after the death of her husband.

Manu is absolutely against the marriage of the widows. He says, no where a second husband is declared for virtuous women. (111) it is not mentioned in the procedure of marriage, (112) a maiden can be given only once, (113) Vedic mantras are applicable to the maidens only. (114)
Though the necessity of having a son is stressed on religious grounds by Manu himself; he ordains a life of celibacy, spent in the studies which leads to heaven, though sinless. (115) As many thousands of Brahmacari Brahmins have gone to heaven, it is in her own interest to remain unmarried and go to heaven. Manu has made provision for an adopted son through whom her dead husband could very well get the benefit of sraddha (116) for him if a woman wants a son through marriage or otherwise, she violates her duty towards her deceased husband, brings disgrace to herself and loses her place in heaven. (117) Such a son does not belong to any one, as the second husband himself cannot be treated as husband to a chaste wife. (118) He treats the son born to a remarried widow merely kinsmen to his father, and not an heir, (119) and therefore prohibits him to be invited to a funeral repast along with his father. (120) He shows his utter contempt for the son of a remarried widow saying whatever is given to him resembles oblations thrown into ashes. (121) This much is enough to dissuade a widow to remarry.

Manu does not even allow the marriage of a betrothed girl to anyone but to her brother-in-law, if necessary, a son through him. (122)

The custom of Niyoga-appointment of a male or female for the procreation of a son for a childless married male or female - is described at length by Manu, (123) through he himself is not in favour of it and condemns it practice among the twice born (124) exception however, is given to a betrothed girl. (125) He lays down strict conditions for Niyoga, making its practice as rare as possible. (126) Husband must have no son, personal appointed must be younger brother of the deceased, appointment by the elders of the family of deceased, the relationship must not continue later, only one son be produced and the partners to regard themselves as a father and as a daughter-in-law after the birth of the son, are some of the conditions laid. In spite of these, the mishaps in the life of a widow in Hindu family could not been curtailed, even during the time of Manu. He therefore suggests the adoption of son/sons of brothers as the common son/sons of all brothers and the same be applied to the wives of one husband. (127)

Many does not recognize the widow as an heir to her sonless husband and no where mention her as possessing the right of inheritance, though the mother of a sonless son is recognized as heir. (128) He does not allow the partition of the property as long as parents or one of them is alive. (129) So the widowed mother can use the property, though does not inherit it.

**Mother**

The mother is undoubtedly the object of greatest reverence for her children in Indian religious and culture as also it is found in world over. Manu also has the same emotions. The neo-brahmachari receives his first aims from his mother, indicative the honour and position she holds vis-à-vis father. (130) She should never be shown disrespect even if highly offended. (131) Her image is that of earth, bearing all the trouble and pains for the sake of children, compensation of which is not possible even in a hundred years. (132) Obedience to mother is declared as the best form of austerity. The care con conquers the worlds and enjoys the bliss in
heaven. The son should not perform meritorious acts without her permission. By honoring her, all that ought to have done is accomplished.

Manu considers the abandonment of mother by her sons a crime and provides punishment. (134) He treats such a son as outcaste who should not been entertained at social and religious ceremonies. (135) Defaming the mother is also a punishable crime. (136) Manu pays his highest regards to mother in allowing a student to carry the dead body of his mother to the place of cremation and not considering it a break of Brahmacharya vow requiring purification rites. (137) The mother has collateral rights over her son along with the father. Manu prescribes the performance of adoption ceremony by both the parents jointly. (138)

With regards to the parents' right of succession to the property of the issueless son, Manu is not so clear. In one place, he gives it to the mother, at another, to the father. (139) But if the son leaves behind his widow with son, the property remains under the control of the mother as guardian and it is not divided among them as long as she is alive. (140) It is an irony of the laws that Manu acted that the mother can be declared as the legal heir of her son's property, only if they die in her lifetime. Not solace to a grieving mother at all.

Motherhood is considered the cherished ideal of the life of women, as Manu observes, to be mother mere women created. (141) He grants several concessions to her; such as, pregnant women are exempted from paying toll-tax, no punishment if the path of the King is made unclean. On the contrary, a barren woman is looked down as impure and Brahma are not allowed to take food from them. (142)

The duties, assigned to mothers by Manu, are quite clear. She is the caretaker of her children and as such, they are not permitted to separate from them on any account. (143) She is not granted independence and existence of her own and has to live with the super-vision of her own sons after the death of her husband. (144) She is expected to uphold and not to discredit her own family as well as her fathers. (145)

**Others**

The discussion on the subject may not be complete if we leave out the women in the most unfortunate situations, those involved in flesh trade and those held as slaves.

Manu reserves his most unsympathetic comments and attitude towards, prostitutes. He forbids a Brahma from taking food offered by them (146) condemns those who subsist on their income (147), their homes are said to be worse than slaughterhouse. (148) He regards them as social evil liable for punishment (149) and recommends simple penance for killing them. He denies them the rite of post-mortem offering. (151) Manu treats their case at par with unfaithful wives. (157) One can only wonder, in spite of such condemnation, such women and the profession, not only continued, but flourished too.

The institution of slavery existed in the days of Manu, as he refers to slave girls who waited upon the Kings to look after his comforts. (153) Manu requires the King to fix their wages and allowances suited to their rank and position for the women employed in royal service. (154)
They are treated on the same level as sons in the matter of giving corporal punishment. (155). Their earning belongs to the master, (156) however; not the son produced by the Master (157) and, as such has no right over his property (158); so also, the slave girls. (159)

**Few Observations:**
Much has been written and said about Manu, the greatest lawgiver of the Hindus, and aptly so. He tried to frame, and present, a comprehensive personal law for the Hindus, which has become a point of reference to the later authorities on personal laws and subsequently became the accepted norm for social and religious relationships in Hindu society and culture. It is natural, therefore, to blame him for all the evils in the society and the present state of affairs in our social and religious realms. This man and his work have sustained many social, religious and political movements. One can either love him or hate him.

Like Moses, he was both a sociologist and theologian. His admixture had such a strength and validity that not many could succeed in presenting an alternative to his laws. In course of time, Hindu religion and Manu's laws became so much interdependent that they merged into each other to the extent that one could say; to be a Hindu is to be a *Manu-vadi* (follower of Manu), though the vice-versa may not be true. The implication and dangers of such simplification are not difficult to discern. One can only be a bit cautious in his/her approach.

Manu provides us a methodology for social and religious reforms. He applied religious insights in providing solutions for the socio-ethical problems of the people and society of his time. It is for this reason, his laws were universally accepted and became transcendental in scope and application. He has proved that a correct religious ideology, with scriptural support has the most potent force to regulate human and societal behaviour and to preserve the basic fabric and structure of the community. Reformers may take note of it.

Manu may be the first lawgiver who has provided a theological, philosophical, ethical or scriptural foundation for the principle/criteria applied in the formulation of his laws. Gender equality, for example, is derived from the scriptural and theological foundation of creation of man and women by the creator through the division of his own body; so also the theory of joint partnership. It is therefore, not surprising that he used the same scriptures in support of laws perpetuating injustice, suppressing human insights taking away human dignity, denying freedom and liberty, especially in the context of the women.

Manu provided legal framework for the support and continuation of institution of patriarchy in the evolving Hindu society; matriarchy and matriarchal principles were made secondary and subordinate to patriarchal ones. They are only highly honored, greatly idealized and mostly commended, but never rewarded and protected. This led to the male dominated society; superiority of the Aryan gave way to superiority of the male at every level of the society.

The noble ideas of freedom and liberty, in the context and their application to women are the worst sufferer in the codified laws of Manu. In the pretext of protecting their rights and personal security, women are forced to come under the complete control of men and made fully
dependents upon them from birth till death. In the laws of Manu, the social mobility, economic freedom and personal liberty are more or less fully curtailed and are brought under the control of their men folk in the family. She lost her freedom to shape and determine her own future, personal freedom to choose her own partner in life property right and economic independence. The dignity worth and value of women and her personal became the victim of inequality structured by the laws of Manu. Prisoner has no freedom; accused no dignity and slave no value, and the women was assigned that status and position in the society by the lawgiver. Male member is given a status higher than his counterpart female, be it mother, wife or sister, and got more than his due share. She was robbed off her dignity and worth by the one who was supposed to uphold and protects them.

The noble concept of natural justice was given a new meaning and perspective in the laws of Manu. The man-made prejudices against women were taken to be natural tendencies of women and they were made to pay the price. They were considered weak in every Aspects of their personality; hence every effort were made to protect them from falling by providing support and concession here and there, but largely by withdrawing, to the extent of destroying her natural and in-built support.

Manu cannot claim to be the unbiased lawgiver. He has shown his preference to the male and his institution than those to female, sympathetic, considered and preferential treatment he might have given in some places and in some situation to the women, but in the matters that concerned most for the dignity, liberty and independence in human existence were heartlessly taken away by him through legal methods. Law of inheritance as enacted by him is the glaring example of his open preference for man instead of women in every aspect of her womanhood.

Manu is not only biased, but also a profounder of double standard and criteria in his dispensation of justice. A woman caught in adultery may be heavily punished or lightly changed; a high caste has the right of lenience whereas low caste none; polygamy is acceptable while polyandry condemned for extinction. This concept of contextual justice is worth analysis.

Manu is credited to provide and infuse Dharma Drsti (religion world-view) in the totality of laws that govern human life and society. His contribution in evolving laws from this aspect cannot be denied. He must, at the same time, accept the discredit that comes along with this credit for all that emerged and develop as corollaries from his world-view upon the law. 'Dharma' does not always mean religion; it means 'duty', ought-ness and imperative. It denotes a task that is bound to be done. It does not necessarily mean just and proper. It is in this context, Dharma as duty (secular) can be superseded by Dharma as duty (religious) and vice versa. This can play havoc in the lives of people, and this is what it exactly did in the lives of Hindu women throughout the ages. A women as wife as bound to her husband once for all in life and life-beyond, had to be chaste, meaning not marrying again, after the death of her husband as her religious duty; but husband is free from this duty in this life weather his wife is alive or dead and will be guided by his right and duty (secular/religious) to have a male child. For the sake of the law of convenience, the religious imperatives of rites and sacrament were withdrawn as they were
linked with the general education of the women, by none other the law given him-self. Assigning secular meaning to a religo-ethico term has paved the way for the dilution and syncretistic denotation and confusion that led to all kinds of contextual interpretation to a well-defined term: Manu may not be able to come clean from the charges of impairing the image of women, her personality and her psychosexual schizophrenia. In accordance with his analysis, and laws, the women, at every stage of her life is treated, brainwashed and taught that she is not wanted, she has no separate identity, she is helpless, she is weak full of evil desires and passion, and worthless. What else than a psychic wrack one can expect coming out from such a situation. If not so, then a timid, and well domesticated slave only. All rebellion of any sort has been crushed by the brute force of manliness with the active, moral and legal support of the laws of the law-giver.

But all is not lost. Manu is a Drsta (visionary). He is conscious of the limitation of codified laws; he has accepted the principle of flexibility and mobility and left the room for its application to suit the varying conditions. (160) He has expressly declared that the laws change with the age of the human race. (161) This may be starting point for the evaluation of his laws, not only specific but general also, including the principle involved or applied. He has trust and faith in the learned and the gentle, who can always enact suitable laws. (162) One can always take advantage of such views and do his/her part in changing old laws and enacting new ones as per the need, hopes and aspirations of people - specific or general.

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22. Ms. IX. 88-89
23. Ms. IX. 90-91
24. Ms. IX. 92
25. Ms. VIII. 225
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33. Ms. II. 66, 39-40
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38. Ms. IX. 118
39. Ms. IX. 192
40. Ms. IX. 193
41. Ms. IX. 130
42. Ms. IX-133, 139 & 127
43. Ms. IX. 140, 132, 134, 135, 128, 129, 136
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96. Ms. VIII. 356-357-358
97. Ms. VIII. 359
98. Ms. VIII. 362
99. Ms. VIII. 363
100. Ms. XI. 176.
101. Ms. VIII. 371
102. Ms. VIII. 416
103. Ms. XI. 176-177,188
104. Ms. IX.195
105. Ms. IX.197
106. Ms. IX.196
107. Ms. 197
108. Ms. IX.77
109. Ms. VIII.29,52
110. Ms. IX.101,V.156,158
111. Ms. V. 162
112. Ms. IX. 65
113. Ms. IX.47
114. Ms. VIII.226
115. Ms. V.160, 159
116. Ms. IX. 190
117. Ms. V. 161
118. Ms. V. 162,166
119. Ms. IX. 160
120. Ms. III. 155, 166
121. Ms. III. 181
122. Ms. IX. 69
123. Ms. IX. 57-63
124. Ms. IX.64-68
125. Ms.IX.69
126. Ms. IX.143, 147,173,144,60,62
127. Ms. IX.182-183
128. Ms. IX.185-189,217
129. Ms. IX. 104
130. Ms. II.50,145,133
131. Ms. II. 225
132. Ms. II. 226-227
133. Ms. II 229, 231-237
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>134.</td>
<td>Ms. III. 389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>135.</td>
<td>Ms. IV.4, III. 157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>136.</td>
<td>Ms. VIII. 275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>137.</td>
<td>Ms. V. 91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>138.</td>
<td>Ms. IX.168, IX. 171, 174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>139.</td>
<td>Ms. IX. 217 &amp; IX.185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140.</td>
<td>Ms. IX. 104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>141.</td>
<td>Ms. IX. 76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>142.</td>
<td>Ms. VIII. 407, IX. 283, IV. 213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>143.</td>
<td>Ms. V. 149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>144.</td>
<td>Ms. V. 148, IX.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>145.</td>
<td>Ms. V. 149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>146.</td>
<td>Ms. IV. 209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>147.</td>
<td>Ms. IV. 84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>148.</td>
<td>Ms. IV. 85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>149.</td>
<td>Ms. IX. 259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150.</td>
<td>Ms. XI. 138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>151.</td>
<td>Ms. V. 90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>152.</td>
<td>Ms. IV. 211, IV.216-217 IV.220 V.90, VIII.262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>153.</td>
<td>Ms. VII. 219, 224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>154.</td>
<td>Ms. VIII. 125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>155.</td>
<td>Ms. VIII. 299-300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>156.</td>
<td>Ms. VIII.516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>157.</td>
<td>Ms. IX.48.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>158.</td>
<td>Ms. IX.179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>159.</td>
<td>Ms. IX.219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>160.</td>
<td>Ms 1.118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>161.</td>
<td>Ms. 1.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>162.</td>
<td>Ms. XII.108</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MISSION AND MISSIONARY METHODS OF SWAMI DAYANANDA SARASWATI
(1824-1883)

Introduction
I was given freedom to choose a topic within the general theme, Mission in the context of multi-faith reality- Hinduism. The general theme expected me to reflect upon Christian Mission in the context of religious pluralism with special reference to Hinduism. This classical Christian missionary approach suggests that only Christians have a mission, and the Hindus are the objects of their mission. Let me suggest a reversal of the approach in order to see that Hindus too may have mission. I am presenting, in this paper, a case for a Hindu mission derived from the life and work of Swami Dayananda Saraswati, one of the pioneers of Hindu reform movements in the second half of nineteenth century. Swamiji was the contemporary of great reformers of his time who struggled hard to present their form of Hindu religion to their fellow men. An understanding of his mission and missionary methods may give us an opportunity to gain a few new insights into our own mission and missionary methods.

The other compelling reason to take up this study is the present context of a revived Hinduism under the forces of Hindutva, talking almost in the same language as that of Swami Dayananda, with the same zeal and might of crusaders. Christians and their institutions are the main targets of their renewed religious militancy that was earlier directed against another minority community in India, the Muslim. Swami Dayananda was one of the first, in modern times, to take up this approach, and these zealots and their organizations, such as, Rashtriya Swayam-sevaka Sangha (RSS), Bajarang Dal, Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) etc., are following. Present study is an attempt to bring forth the general methodology these organizations peruses in order to achieve their goal.

Brief life sketch
In persuasion to his sanyasin tradition, Swami Dayananda had kept his life background a closely guarded secret. It was late in life that he was recognised a force to reckon with, and then it was too late to gather much about him and his family. It was during his trip to Pune in 1874, for the first time, he opened himself up to an audience and gave a few glimpses of his early life. He was about 60 years old and was, perhaps, sure enough of not encountering anyone from his family and acquaintances. Many, after his death, tried to reconstruct his early family life, but not with much success. I am depending upon one of the most researched construction of life of the Swami by Jordens.1

1 Jordens, JTF, Dayananda Saraswati: His life and Ideas, Oxford University Press, Delhi. 1978
Dayananda Saraswati was the first born of a Brahman, belonging to an ancient SamaVedic branch of the Audichya clan, in a town, identified as Tankara, in the state of Morvi in Kathiawar, Gujarat. He was born in 1824, though we can not ascertain his correct date of birth. His was supposed to be known as Dayaram Mulashankar, or Mulji, but became famous with his sanyasin name, Dayananda Saraswati. His father was a strict and devout Shaivite. He was an official tax collector, a moneylender and a landowner. As such, he was an important and wealthy man, exerting much influence in his society. He had two more sons and two daughters, but he took great interest in his eldest son; his education, religious initiation, studies of Vedas, Vedic rituals, study of Dharmashashtras and Sanskrit grammar. At the age of fifteen, he was encouraged to take part in the religious ceremonies associated with Shiva-ratri that included fasting and overnight vigil in the temple. It was on that day, his strong desire to search for religious truth beyond rituals, liturgies and myths was awakened and a life commitment to go after that truth began. It so happened that he saw some mice running over the emblem of Shiva and eating the offerings. This raised serious questions in the mind of young Mulashankar, which his father could not answer to the satisfaction of his son. Soon after this experience, the sudden deaths of his young sister and of his uncle-teacher convinced him the need to seek salvation through some other way. He found the way in and through asceticism, yoga and renunciation. His family tried to tie him with the worldly affairs and arranged for his marriage, which he avoided as long as possible, and when he could not, he ran away in search of moksha. He was twenty-one years of age when he left the home of his father.

Religious Influences upon Dayaram

The Brahmanic background and tradition of Swami Dayananda is worth taking note of. The community was characterised by its deep roots in antiquity through Sanskrit rites and learning and maintaining old Vedic tradition. The Hindu community in Kathiawar, in contrast, took up Puranic religious practices and rites. The great majority of them followed Smriti texts as guides in social and religious relationships and were known as Smarta. They trace their origin to Adi Shankaracharya, the great exponent of Advaitic philosophy, and Kumarila, the theologian of ritualistic school of Purvamimansa. They reaffirmed Vedic rites and dharma in reaction to the Buddhists and the Jains. They considered themselves elite, orthodox and guardians of the oldest traditions of Hinduism. They recognised the pantheon of Hindu deities worthy of proper worships though preferred Shiva as their favourite deity. They should not be confused with a particular Hindu sect Shaivism; they only represent a group of orthodoxy of the Hindus with a strong attachment to the worship of Shiva. They took keen interest in their religion and initiated many reforms. It is, however, to be noted that not all Brahmans of the area were conscious of their heritage. Many among them left the tradition and considered as 'fallen' since they reduced themselves to an inferior status by cutting off their connection with the shastras and Shaivism. Some followed Vaishnavism. Some of them either adopted Jainism or became priests in their temples. Some among them became the priests of low caste people. The Smarta Brahman looked
down these groups of Brahmans, some of them were even expelled from their clans and branches. By the end of eighteenth century, some of the brahmanic clans have established themselves, occupying leading positions in the society, playing important part in the politics, were holding landed properties and engaged in profitable business, and were the real carriers of the rich brahmanic tradition. The Kathiawar brahmanic community, therefore, stood apart not only from other Hindu communities, but also from the brahmanic communities of whole of Gujarat. Swami Dayananda came from such a rich traditional community with deep interest in Sanskrit learning, grounding in Shashtras and religious devotion to Lord Shiva.

The socio-religio-cultural environment, from the time immemorial, has been such in the Kathiawar region of Gujarat that it produced many religious and political leaders of repute. The area is characterised by the presence of temples and monuments of saints and martyrs, pilgrim and religious centres belonging to the Jain, Vaishnava and Shaiva religious traditions. There is hardly any doubt about the influence of teachings of these traditions upon the general populace of the area, irrespective of their religious affiliations. Swami Dayananda, as well as Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, who came from this Kathiawar region of Gujarat, had greatly influenced by these religious traditions.

Shaivism was the family religion of Swami’s parents. It was also the religion of the Brahman community in Kathiawar. Though it was not a dominant and majority group in the area, it had a distinctive identity: practically all of them were Shaivite. The Brahmans preserved Shaivism in Kathiawar along with few Kshatriya followers. Shaivism always had a great influence in the area, as it was also associated with the rulers of the region. The famous Somanath temple and the founder of Pashupata sect of Shaivism, Lakulisha, belonged to this region which gives us some indication of the strength of Shaivism in this area. It may not be just coincidence that the Swami’s later reforms had a clear affinity with that of Madhavgar of Nadiad that took place in 1824 and had a strong followings in the Kathiawar region. The reformists condemned all idol worship and did not believe in the incarnations, depreciated the observance of fasts and the performance of Shraddha and gave no credence to pollution of any sort, including untouchability. They taught that the alms should be restricted to the old and the needy, and not to the Brahman. They had no central place or person of supreme authority. The message of the reformists was spread through dedicated workers and teachers in yellow robes with rudraksha-mala, who lived in all simplicity, refusing everything except necessary food and clothing. Swamiji might have met many of its missionaries in the early part of his formative period whose influence upon his life, work and thought is quite obvious.

Vaishnavism was a comparatively new in the area but had large following among the masses. Most of its adherents were non-Brahmans, though there were a few Brahmans who joined the sect. The Vallabhaacharya and the Swami Narayana sects were the most popular among the main sects of Vaishnavism. Their adherence to the Purana and the practice of rituals with much pomp and show was in direct contrast to the simple and solemn Shaivite worship, upon which it could hardly exert much influence.
Jainism, too, had a large following in this region where it had penetrated deep into the rural areas and the society, from the millionaire to the village grocer. The first modern reformer, Vijyadharma (1868-1922) came from this region. Rayachand Mehta, another thinker who had a great influence on Gandhi, belonged to Kathiawar. Dayananda’s family, being in business, certainly had some dealings with the Jains and he could have not escaped from their influences upon himself. Kathiawar claims to be the land of Swami Aristanemi, the twenty-second Tirthankara. The Jain canon was supposed to be fixed by a council that took place in this area. Among the Jain groups, Sthanaka-vasi sect was very strong in the Kathiawar region. They call themselves so, because their monks live in private houses, a marked distinction from those who live in monasteries. They differed from other Jains in their radical rejection of idol, temple worship and did not approve of taking up pilgrimages. They strongly insisted upon strict moral life and severe discipline for their monks.

Vaishnavism, however, greatly influenced the Jains, so much so that the Jains were hardly distinguishable from the Vaishnavites. They also had close caste relationships and had adopted many Vaishnavite ways of life and customs. The Brahmans mostly conducted Jains temple worship; they had Hindu idols in their temples, four of their sacraments were the same as those of Hindus, and they celebrated the same festivals. They had some major differences in rituals and practices: Jains do not give any meaning to the bathing in the holy rivers; they cremate their ascetics just as an ordinary human is cremated; they do not offer gifts to the dead; they do not practice Sati. In spite of these differences, the Jains were not considered to be ritually polluted, unclean or unworthy of closer social or ritual contact with the Vaishnavites.

Another major characteristic of Jain-Vaishnava ethos was its insistence on *Ahimsa*, with its resulting aversion to the slaughter of animals and the practice of vegetarianism. The Vaishnava cult of Krishna, as the divine cowherd, gave a strong mythological and emotional strength for the protection of cows. Jains, on the other hand, went a step ahead in protecting all animals through a special institution, *Pinjarapol* (refuge for animals), where unproductive and old animals were taken cared for. Their representatives even bought the animals from slaughterhouses and saved their lives in their institution.

Kathiawar of the nineteenth century distinguished itself from most of India as the land of *sadhus, sanyasins*, monks, saints, and mendicants. Apart from them, there was an additional moving population of holy-men on their way to, and from, many sacred places of pilgrimages in the peninsula. This wandering of holy-men must have been a great attraction for the young Dayaram, who later chose this way of life for himself as a *sanyasin*.

These were the influences that shaped the early life of Dayaram that he carried over to his later life as a *sanyasin*, Swami Dayananda Saraswati.

*Sanyasa and the Preparation*
As it was earlier noted, Dayaram was not satisfied with the answers that were given to his religious quests by his father. He did make up his mind to look out the answers by himself. He began to spend much of his time in studies of religious scriptures under his uncle and other teachers. The untimely deaths of his sister and uncle took him closer to a decision for renouncing the world and devoting rest of his life in search of personal salvation. He must have explicitly shown this tendency, which must have caused greater anxieties for his parents, so much so that they began to plan for his early marriage. He could manage to postpone this event in his life on the plea for studies till the age of twenty-one. As he heard about the impending marriage, he quietly left the home of his parents, never to return, never to own his family, never to claim their inheritance. Though his father found him out within three months after his escape from home, as he slipped out his family connection to his fellow seeker. He was properly thrashed out by his father and dispatched home with an escort. He, somehow, managed to escape before reaching home, with determination never ever to repeat the same mistake again.

He moved in Baroda region and resumes his studies, especially Shankara Vedanta, with much vigour and conviction, under different teachers. It was here he met the Jagadguru Shankaracharya of Shringeri Math, Swami Purnananda Saraswati, who initiated him as a sanyasin in the order of dandi and gave him the name by which he is better known, Dayananda Saraswati.

The Dandi order is one of ten monastic orders of Advaita Vedanta, claimed to be established by Adi Shankaracharya himself. Six of them admit Grihastha (for married sanyasins), whereas the rest admit only bramhacharins (unmarried) sanyasins, restricting only to the Brahmans. They are known as Gosain and Dandin respectively. Saraswati Dandins owe their allegiance to the Shankaracharya of Shringeri Math, who is also the spiritual head of the Smarta Brahmans. The Dandins specialise themselves in the study of Yajurveda and their guiding aphorism is the famous mahavakya of the Upanishad, aham brahmasmi (I am Brahman). They also have a special interest in Patanjali Yoga. It is no wonder that Mulji chose this order and devoted many years in the studies of Vedas, Advaita Vedanta and Yoga.

**New life through Initiation**

The initiation into the order took place on the bank of Narmada, not far from Baroda, near the twin city of Chanoda-Karnali. After performing purification rites, he performed funeral rites for himself, and then Shraddha, for the last time, to the ancestors including himself. Thus he freed himself, once for all, from his obligations, whatsoever, to his family, and inheritance from them. His immersion into the river and coming out from it symbolised new birth from the womb of the mother Narmada, which was immediately acknowledged by the initiating Shankaracharya who paid his obeisance to new sanyasin. He was given a Kamandal (water-carrier) and Danda (pastoral staff) signifying his new status. Though the ceremony was Vedic and non-sectarian, the young initiated, in Dandin tradition, continued to use the symbols that indicated his special dedication to Lord Shiva - Rudraksha and horizontal lines of ashes on the forehead.
The he, on his own initiative and persistence, broke down the fetters of three debts - to the sages, ancestors and gods, at a very young age of twenty-three. He now had no obligation to anyone except to himself in his own search for wisdom and Moksha. As a Dandin, he is not obliged to stay in a monastery, or consult his guru or superiors, yet he even surrendered his Danda to his guru as it required some rituals and ceremonies associated with it.

Next few years, he spent in studying Sanskrit grammar, Advaita and yoga in baroda-Ahmedabad-Abu area under various teachers. At the end of 1854, he went to attend Kumbha mela at Haridwar and, thereafter, he move into the upper Himalayan region to continued his pursuit of salvation through Yoga, especially the Hatha-yoga. His preference to action and practice over theoretical search through the studies of Scriptures, Karma-marga over the Jnana-marga can easily be marked. He travelled whole of upper Himalayas, practising yoga, taking advise from the senior and practising yogis residing in the interior parts of the region. In 1860, he came down, rather disappointed, yet continued his search in the places around Farrukhabad, Kanpur, Allahabad, Mirzapur, Benaras and Vindhya region. A very brief trial with drugs in search for personal and cosmic experience could only lead him to further disappointments. He, after seeing a vision, decided to go back to his studies of grammar and Scriptures under Swami Virjananda Saraswati (1779-1868), a blind-fellow-Dandin guru, residing in Mathura. He sharpened his mind through the study of Ashtadhyayi of Panini and its chief commentary, Mahabhashya of Patanjali, Vedic grammar, Vedic Sanskrit and texts. It was here in Mathura, the famous city of Krishna-legend, the spirit of a reformer was awakened in him; it was here, his search for personal moksha was overtaken by the resolve to reform Hinduism.

The Motif for New Mission

The motif was provided by his guru, Swami Virjananda, who himself had a great desire to reform Hinduism from within. He had been a teacher to many rulers and princes of the states who had helped him to establish a regular school to teach grammar and allied subjects. A turning point, in the life of Swami Vajrananda, came through a Shashtrartha – a public dialogue on some disputed understanding of the Scriptural texts, with Pandit Krishna Shashtri of Banaras. The dialogue took place between the followers of the contestants, and not between the contestants. This exercise was taken as a fight between the Vaishnava and Shaiva scholars, involving much emotions and passions, and it became a sordid affair, full of intrigues and deceptions. The decision went in favour of Pandit Krishna Shastri, with the alleged help of money and partial moderator. It is interesting to note that the Swami was so hurt that he complained to the pandits of Mathura, as well as the collector, but no one did any justice to his followers. This brought a great change in the life and mission of the blind scholar. He moved towards more orthodox and conservative position, setting aside all secondary texts of grammar and scriptures. In the process, he began to evolve a new criteria for the authentic Hindu Scriptures and religious literature. He made a vital distinction between the arsha and anarsha texts – works of genuine and real rishis and those composed by others. He pointed out that the
genuine rishis commenced their work with the word either *OM* or *atha*, whereas others invoked particular deities; *rishis’* compositions exhibit universal characteristics, others are full of sectarian bias and hatred; recognised teachers, such as Patanjali and Shankara, wrote commentaries on *rishis’* works, and those upon which they have not commented upon can not be recognised as authentic. The Swami, not only set this three-fold criteria, but also passionately moved to win over others. He was concerned with the multiplication of unauthentic and sectarian religious literatures. He wanted to restrict them only within oral tradition, and, if not possible, throw them into the river. He tried another way by encouraging study of Sanskrit in order to bring genuine scriptures closer to the interested people. He tried to enlist the help of the British Commissioner and several Indian princes, even wrote letters to Queen Victoria, but not much help was extended to him. He even planned to convene *Sarvabhauma Sabha* – universal council –, which could look into the causes of degeneration of Hinduism, work out some remedy and do something for it revival and renaissance.

These are the ideas that were inculcated into the mind of the disciple by his Guru. These were consciously demanded by the guru as daksina; promise me that you will as long as you live devout everything, even give up your life to the propagation in India of the books of rishis and the Vedic religion. Swami Dayananda Saraswati paid this dakshina to Swami Vajranand. Thus a new mission emerged for the swami – no longer to seek personal *moksa* but to do something to do for Hinduism and Hindus.

**Method applied by the Swami**

1. **Mass Contact:**

   It must have been a very painful decision on behalf of a lonely wanderer and *sanyasin* in search of personal *moksa* to go public and enter into bizarre affairs of social and religious reformation of a supposedly degenerated society. Still he moved into it with the same zeal and commitment as he moved out of it. He began to travel around the area within the triangle Mathura,- Gwalior –Azmir, never moving more than 200 miles away from his guru, stayed longer periods at different periods and became a public preacher and teacher of grammar, Vedanta, yoga and scriptures. He began to advise people on matters of rites and rituals, preaching against idol worship and Vaishnavite sectarianism. His visit to *Khumb mel* was necessitated by his desire to contact people in great numbers at one place and at one time. This gave him an immense opportunity to influence a great number of people and win them over to his ideas and ideals. Throughout his life he was seen constantly at different places where local religious fairs and festivals were taking place. Apart from the masses he did not avoid people of high intellect scholarship and elite. He made personal contact with people in high places, princes and administrators and was on constant move contacting people of all shapes and shades and station.
2. Returning to the Source:
In the context of Hinduism, it is not easy to select and define the real source of religious faith. Swami Dayananda was in the Karma-bhumi of Lord Krishna and the Pujya-bhumi of the Vaishnavites. Bhagavata Purana and the Krishna cult were the supreme. He soon began to criticise the Vaishnavite scriptures, their rituals, worship pattern and idols through discourses and pamphlets. He advocated the study of Vedas and Upanishads and himself started in all earnest to teach and preach the basic tenets of Vedic religion. He refused to read and teach secondary works even on Shankar, such as Pancdasi an exposition of advaita Vedanta by Madva because he considered them man-made. Though he was initially attached to Saivism of his order, he began to move slowly towards the vedantic idea of the absolute. Later he vehemently criticised the idols of Saivism as he did to that of Vaishnavism. His study of Upanishads and Vedanta moved him towards a non-puranic and non-sectarian concept of deity. He moved nearer to Veda and Vedic practices and rituals advocating sandhya ritual, agnihotra sacrifice and recitation of gayatri mantra. He encouraged and personally trained many Brahmans to learn Sanskrit, study Vedas and perform Vedic sacrifices. He revived many Vedic sacraments, giving right to the individuals to perform the Vedic sacraments without the aid of Brahmans. He encouraged people to perform the sacrament when they are due and not merely to their symbolic observations. He rectified the practice of upananyan sanskar – sacred thread ceremony, which was being performed at the time of marriage instead of in childhood.

3. Pamphleteering and Propaganda:
By the second half of the 19th century, publishing and printing were extensively used to propagate religion and religious literature. Swami too used this method in propagating these ideas among the people as well as entering into the polemics with other religious people and missionaries. In 1867, during the Khumb mela at Haridwar, he went with his Sanskrit pamphlet, entitled Bhagavat Khandanam – Refutation of Bhagavat. This was his attempt to demolish the doctrines and practices of Vaishnavism. He also put up a banner inscribed Pakhand Khandini – Refutation of Hypocrisy, and pitched up a tent receiving pilgrims and renouncing as false and worthless all those things they endeared most; idol worship, puranic legends, incarnation myths, sex and holy rivers.

Much before he earned his reputation of demolishing the doctrines and practices of other religions, he set out to do so within the parameter of his own religion at the places and times where they were bound to reach the greatest possible number. He brought thousands of copies of pamphlets against Bhagavat for distribution. Gathered around him a team of sanyasis of his own order and other Brahmans, he spent much of his time in instruction to the seekers and discussions with the pilgrims. It was well-planned enterprise by the Swami. It was the beginning of a systematic onslaught on the evils of Hinduism at the centre where they are most explicit,
where the audience was countless, representing all shapes and kinds of practising Hinduism. He used the same plan and method and opportunity thereafter every where through out his life.

4. Critique of Hinduism:
Dealing with idol worship, miracle pilgrimages and holy men, puranas, modern reform movements, etc. This savage indictment is full of concrete details of persons, places and practices, drawing on a wide variety of services from shastras to folklore

He criticised at length the corrupt teachings of the purana, especially the Bhagavata, He recalled their stories abounding in internal contradictions, logical and physical impossibilities, moral degradation, He changed that their religious leaders were steeped in pleasure, sex and untold luxury.

Idol worship was treated with contempt. He was at pains to prove that it was absent in Vedas and the theory of the lost Vedas is untrue. It is against reason and the idea of giving life to an inert matter. \( \text{pranapratishtha} \) is nothing but pure absurdity. To prove idol worship from tradition is also worthless as traditions are being established and changed all the times. True tradition is determined by logical and by conformity with the Vedas.

The exploded the myth of the wonders of India by his severest criticism of miracles and pilgrimages, we hear meat eating idols, monkeys of enormous size, idols that smokes and drinks, pond that spots fire, a temple without flies, simple logic dissolves all miracles some are just tricks manufactured by priests, others are simply physically impossible, some are mere physical phenomena, The denounced the deceit of astrology, as trap to extort money.

It may be interesting to look into his criticism of fellow reformers in Hinduism. Swami Dayananda must have been wonderstruck by the variety of reformers and reform movements present at one place and time, be it Bombay or Calcutta. They had different belief pattern, different concepts and plans for religious and social reform programme within Hinduism and Hindu society. There were conservative, orthodox, agnostic and rationalist reformers. Among those on the orthodox side the attitude towards social reform were as different as they were among these who staved for religious reform. Some reformers were very westernised others were ardent promoters of a Hindu cultural rivals. He was quick to notice the extreme individualism of the reformers. They were hardly found themselves in full agreement with each other on vital issues. Their conceptions of the essence of Hinduism, the sources of true religion, and the implementation of religious reform were quite divergent. Dayananda noted that they all share only in denying Vedas the rightful place for unique and definite revelation, hence, the cause for their disagreement on all other issues of vital importance.

Brahmos, for example, were his friends and admirers. He denounced as errors their belief in la continuous new creation of jivas; their rejection of rebirth and then tenet that repentance deletes sins. They reject \textit{Varna} system because they confuse \textit{Varna} with caste. And do not understand
the symbolic value of sacred thread. They are Anglophiles and neglect their own. They admire Jesus, Moses, Mohammed, Nanak, Chaitanya, as holy men. But forget the ancient *rishis*.

5. **Approaching the Elite**

It was not difficult for an intelligent person like *Swami* not to discern the existing power structures of the society in which he lived and was so concerned to reform. The elite, consisting of Brahmans, kshatriyas and pandits, had the power and they exercised considerable influence over the masses in rural and urban society in India. They became the centre of his approach in order to reform the society. He applied this approach soon after his initial set back at Khumba mela in an area he knew well. This was the area in the western part of Doab- the area between two rivers Ganga and Jamuna in the heartland of India. This was the area where his guru also had a considerable influence. This area was directly under British administration since the beginning of the 19th century with not much influence of the local princes. Power and influence was largely concentrated in the local religious and social elites. The area was highly fertile, had agrarian populace. The Brahman mostly dominated it. Obviously the main reason can be seen in the fact that most of the holy places that were associated with a great number of religious fairs and festivals, ceremonies and rituals are situated along the banks these most holy rivers. Later he concentrated in the areas where he had established schools, had considerable followers and where people wanted him for their religious needs.

*Swami* Dayanand was deeply influenced by *Manu Smriti*, especially in its support to *varnaashram dharma* and its concept of kinship. He had always taken keen interest in influencing political authorities that can exert their own influence in changing social and religious orders. He like his mentor sought the help of princes and local authorities, even the British in propagating his ideas and carrying out his plans. In Ajmer he taught the Deputy Commissioner, Major Davidson about the duty of the Raj to prevent religious mal practices and with the British agent, General Brooks about the prevention of cow slaughter. Though he has many of his followers, contacts and sympathisers in high places in administration politics and among rulers, statecraft in itself had not been his concern. He had only touched upon it in the context of special problems he encountered within Hinduism; propagation of the time *shastra*, cow protection; restructuring of society according to the four *varna*. He has yet to propose a theory of state and government. He Became aware of the questions that were being discussed by the intelligent of Calcutta concerning the nature and function of the state, the role of British government in India; and definition of nation hood and nationality. He met Indian political thinkers and writers, administrators, members of legislative councils, barristers, executives of Indian Associations, through these contacts, Swami Dayananda began to evolve his own concept of state craft and also to make some evaluation of the British government of India.
6. **Introducing Sanskrit:**
Swami Dayananda adopted a new method of propagating his ideas by using Sanskrit as a means of communication with the learned pundits. All his earlier propaganda materials and pamphlets were written in Sanskrit, and he delivered his lectures in this language. He realised the practical utility of the language in *shastrartha*, as quoting in Sanskrit from the scriptures had general acceptance and authenticity. His mother tongue was not Hindi and he had no opportunity to learn English, thus he found it easy to convey his thoughts in Sanskrit better and clear, till he learned enough Hindi to speak and write. Moreover, he wanted others to learn Sanskrit well so that they can perform rituals and sacraments meaningfully and with ease. He was convinced that the proper knowledge of Sanskrit was essential for the reform, which he would like to initiate. He himself acquired his mastery of the language through his guru in Mathura. The traditional Sanskrit school, in his opinion, were producing traditional pandits and *purohits* whose knowledge of the language was inadequate and they were wasting their time in studying valueless and inauthentic books. Keeping this in mind, he started Sanskrit schools. In these schools he made provision for food, clothes and accommodation for the teachers and the students. The curriculum included the study of Ashtadhyayi, manusmriti and Vedas. Students were expected to perform *sandhya* (prayer) rites twice a day, to miss meant fasting. They were supposed to spend all their time at the school and were not allowed to go outside visits. Regular tests were held; diligent students were rewarded.

This experiment was a failure. Swami realised that they did not achieve their objectives to become centres of training in and the dissemination of his Vedic religion. Some of his pandits reverted to the defence of sectarian shaivism in his absence. Others mismanaged the institution. Students too were a problem, some came only for clothes and books and then disappeared; some tended to go back to their old sectarian Hinduism.

7. **Shastrartha:**
It refers to an ancient practice of religious discourses and discussions on the true meaning and import of scriptural texts. It used to be inter- or intra-religious discussions between learned scholars on the matters of religious concerns. It also refers to any kind of polemic between the people and scholars of different schools and religions. By the beginning of nineteenth century, it became a kind of a forum where the scholars of different faiths and sectarian affinities gathered to-gather along with their followers and supporters, to settle their scores through public debates. Swami Dayananda almost perfected this as an art during second half of the century. He entered into public and private debates, discussions and dialogues with the pandits and missionaries of different religions, especially Christian. One should not be unaware of the fact that *shastrartha*, for Swami Dayananda, was an important method to attack and weaken religious elite – pandits, gurus, *sanyasins*, Brahmans, people in authority- and win people over his side.

One of the central problems and the subject matter of this *shastrartha* was the question of respective authority of the many sources of Hinduism and their scriptures. Dayananda applied
his mind to different sources – Vedas, Manu Smriti, Mahabharata, Upanishads, Vedanta, Purana, Bhagvadgita, Ramayana etc., to mention a few. The question of Brahmana being a part of Vedas was the subject often disputed. The concept of revelation, the theory of original but lost Vedas too was hotly discussed. The authentic and non-authentic shastras, their numbers, and criteria for authenticity of their origin was in the agenda for discussion. Nature of God, identity and difference between God and soul as propounded in the Purana and theological and philosophical books were hotly pursued.

The key issue in these debates was the idol worship, more specifically, its sanction by the scriptures. As the fame of the swami as a challenger and a successful debater spread, the defeated parties often engaged eminent pandits from reputed institutions and centres to challenge the swami. The most important one was at Banaras, which set the trend for all the rest, such exercises and the resolve of the swami to continue this method for most of his life more rigorously, planning and researching. He argued with great self-confidence and competence, making pandits to look defenceless as they failed to present any conclusive proof in favour of scriptural base for idolatry. As the swami took some time to site the text, the chairman, who was a sympathiser of the pandits, suddenly closed the debate on the pretext that the crowd was becoming restive and emotionally charged. The pandits took it as a victory for themselves and discredited the swami in the eyes of the audience who became hostile to him thereafter everywhere in the northern part of India and lost interest in his reforms.

Subsequently, with rich experience in *sastrartha*, he developed almost a fool proof style consisting of quoting of texts, mostly from the Vedas, applying principle of grammar and logic and taking more rational and practical views.

The theoretical and practical aspect of religion was not left out. The concern for morality- social and ritual led the swami to meet new parameters through his principle of inner righteousness and he defended himself quite convincingly. He confronted caste system and refuted theory of ordained by birth, proposing new hermeneutics. He considered it a political institution of different professional classes or guilds with rights and privileges, though hereditary but can be changed by the state. He made distinction between *varna* and *jati*, and argued that *jati* referred to species-, to the humans only, as such *jati* I the sense of caste has no validity.. It is a secular institution, and not the religious, therefore, it is changeable. He rejected caste taboos about food on the principle of morality and hygiene and refused to practice in any form of untouchability in his personal life. He also rejected the moral principle of Nivriti- inaction, and affirmed the principle of Pravriti- action for the welfare of man and society.

8. **Polemics**

In 1877 the famous three-cornered disputations of the Chandrapur Mela took place, where Christians, Muslims and Aryas discussed religious issues. The Muslim side was represented by Maulana Mohammed Kasim, the founder of the famous Deoband school for the protection and revival of Islam. Two missionaries represented Christianity, Rev E.W. Panker of American
Methodist Episcopal Church who later became the Bishop, and Rev T.P. Scott, later became the Principal of Barreilly Theological Seminary. The disputation was mainly concerned with problems of creation and salvation. Pressing questions from Rev. Scott could not make Swami clarify the relationship between *prakrti* and the Lord.

It was in March 1877 that Swami Dayananda entered Punjab. It was here that a new face of attracting Swami revealed to the Christian. Earlier he had good and cordial relations with the Christian missionaries. His debates were held even in Churches. They were so cordial to each other that many a time he is said to be an agent of Christian missionary even a paid worker. He was often charged that they had bought him. Yet his Punjab debates did not show such cordiality. Here he gave one of his caustic criticisms of the Bible. He held that the Christian practice like virtues preached in the Vedas. Their anxiousness to meet him only showed their awareness of the importance of his presence and impact. It was the emergence of a new idea of Dayananda, the concept of *shuddhi* that made them realise how real threat he was.

It was in Punjab that Dayananda first mooted the question of *Shuddhi*, when he raised at Ludhiana. A Brahman teacher at a mission school who was getting ready for Baptism, changed his mind at the behest of the Swami. This brought the problem to his attention. He was informed that Punjabi Hindus felt the missionary propaganda as a real threat. At Jullunder he gave a lecture on Shudhi and himself performed the re-conversion of Christians. Many un-baptised Christian and potential converts changed their minds once they met or heard him. Some Christian preferred to reconvert themselves.

**8. Foundation of an Organisation- Samaj Experiments:**

The most important decision he took to found the Arya *Samaj*, the organisation that would plant his message and reform in the society. The idea first implemented in Arrah, Bihar in 1872 and at Banaras in 1874 but failed within a short time. It is interesting to note that the idea of forming an Arya *Samaj* third time did not originate from the Swami but rather by pressure and demand from below. The very first Arya *Samaj* was established by a whole set take over of the local prarthana *Samaj*. Swami Dayananda formulated a set of rules, which were printed and distributed. The *Samaj* did not agree on Swami’s ideas on marriage and *Niyoga*, but he did not press for them, sharing his flexibility, but this experiment failed within six months of its formation.

Dayananda firmly refused to be its leader or president, but accepted an ordinary membership. He did not find any other *Samaj* in Western India but branches were established there for a short periods in Poona, Broach and other places. Sooner business and intellectual humanities began to tend their support to the *Samaj*. The support and active participation by Mahadev Govind Ranade and Mahatma Jotirao Phule in the reform programmes of the *Samaj* gave a big boos the Samaj in Bombay and elsewhere, and its support base was extended to the lower orders in the society.

It is a point of interest that the most numerous and dynamic core of the Arya Sabha was a group of businessmen of the rising trading class which neither very wealthy nor the leading intellectuals. They had grown used to all kinds of cross-caste organisations in social and
municipal affairs and they knew enough about the way to set up a modern association. They were motivated by genuine religious aspirations. The twenty-eight rules constituted a very clumsy mixture of statements of belief, organisational by laws and moral precepts. The cradle content was minimal, in spite of fact that the Swami had already worked out his own theological system. He had no wish to impose his view on the Aryas. He only insisted upon Vedas and god. The Vedas should be accepted on the principal self-evident authority and should be interpreted with the help of the books composed by the rishis. God should not be represented by an idol ass he is free from all bodily characteristics and from any birth as avatar.

The Samaj had the functions to perform; running of a Central Vedic library, publication of magazine and; general supervision of the Samaj school for boys and girls. One had to be of good character,. Principled and concerned with the welfare of the people, Membership to committee was open to males and females. The school should teach ancient scriptures. The Samaj was committed to send preachers around to preach the truth everywhere. The duties of Samajis were to work for the advancement of the Samaj and attend to its weekly meetings. The meetings were the occasion for exchanging ideas and discussing practical matters. But they primarily meant for religious purpose. Chanting of Samaveda and lectures on Vedic dharma. They also had financial obligation too for the running of the Samaj and its programmes.

The early Samajas were motivated by the desire for a religious entity of their own that would be independent of the established oppressive structures. They were in search of the genuine sources of Hinduism, aspiring for a purified religion, seeking for a faith that freed them from Brahman and sectarian dictatorship and gave them self sufficiency and self respect.

9. Defender of the Hindus:
In a case, involving Munshi Indramani, who had written numerous books and pamphlets against Swami Dayananda came to his help. He directly wrote letters to the branches of the Arya Samaj to collect fund for the defence of the Munshi. It was for the first time the Swami succeeded in getting the Aryas deeply involved in an agitation in which Arya Samaj projected the image of being the defender of the Hinduism and earned the sympathy of the majority of Hindus.

Cow Protection was another issue that he took up to prove his bonafide, and that of his Samaj. On the defender of Hindus, he has been raising this ever since he met his guru. Represented his case and approached the government authorities; but with no success. In 1881 he took decision to launch a systematic agitation against Cow slaughter, issuing his pamphlet Gokarunanidhi (Cow-Ocean of Compassion) Gokrishyadiklrukshini Sabha (Society for the protection of Cow, agriculture, etc.,) and began signature campaign.

Hindu-Urdu controversy was another step. It was not just a social and linguist problem, but had an intimate connection between language, religion and nation, sum it, connected with Hindu nationalism. In 1882 the Swami heard of Hunter commission, which is looking into the case, he advised Aryans to collect signatures and submit memorials. Thus he was not only taking a novel initiative, but he was pressing them to participate to the full extent in the campaign.
The campaign helps the *Samaj* to consolidate its presence in the Hindu Society. It should be noted that the Swami created none of these campaigns, He only came to assist the movement that was already launched. They had a common factor in being directed against the Muslim and containing anti-British bias, He thus steered *Samaj* closer to orthodox and sectarian Hinduism, anticipating the Hindu movement of samgathan, solidarity and integration of the whole Hindu Community.

**Evaluation**

One cannot miss the sincerity, integrity and zeal of Swami Dayanand in his commitment to the mission he set before him that led him to leave the security of his family and society. His was a mission for personal salvation, a strong desire to be liberated from the existential life and realise the essential life. He never moved away from his initial commitment, though he became deeply involved in the process of reforming Hindu society.

He was a practising ascetic in its absolute form, throughout his life. He spent long hours in daily meditations less in sleep. Yet, he was a man of action and practised what he preached. One may see a Shaivite bias in his attack of Shaivism, but it was just for a while before returning back to the Vedic religion, religious practices and advaitic philosophical approach. His deeper involvement in training, propagating and defending his ideas and reforms are well known and well recorded.

His basic critique of Hinduism, attacking idol worship, sectarianism and superstitious belief and practices, may sound to be destructive and negative. But he devoted much more time in positive instructions in Vedic practices, essential rites and sacraments and tried to remove non-Vedic association with them. He emphasised the moral principles of the *shastras* in personal life.

He attempted to reform Hinduism from within on the basis of lofty, ideas and ideals found in the Vedas. He popularised Vedic rituals and rites, freeing them from economic burdens and superstition. He gave rites to women to learn Vedas and recite mantra. He tried to get away with the mediation of priest. Yet he performed *yajnas* (ritual in which his belief in vicarious removal of the results of sin by penance, recitation land fasting was publicly expressed. He even could not do away with the use of specialists, of ritual fees, of fasting and penance.

*Sastrarth*, as a method had been most successful and Dayananda was concerned of its usefulness in propagating his reforms. Experience taught him its limitations when ever incompetent pandits were invited in presence of an emotionally charged and biased audience. The reaction of the people of Banaras to the demands of orthodoxy demonstrated the strength of the system and the weakness of the individual iconoclast. It has always been an inter-religious dialogue within the context of Hinduism. Like the ancient Upanishadic sages, Swami Dayananda set out to clear the mess of rituals, rites, doctrines, superstitions, institution and leaders that had outgrown the Vedic religion. He just wanted his people to go back to the simplicity of Vedic religion. He was challenged by the Hinduism of his time and fought the abuses wherever he met. He stoically
faced fierce opposition, who often used vicious and violent methods, abuse, slander and physical threats to his life. It was out of such situation, his ideas and methods emerged.

His polemics on the other hand introduce an element that was not prominent in Hindu religion and culture, attack on other religions. This gave in to hit campaign against all religions – Jainism, Sikhism, Islam and Christianity being most severe on the last two. The language used and the attack made subsequently went beyond all human sensitivities and gave rise to emotional and irrational reaction from the members of all concerned communities. The rise of Hindu nationalism and the communal forces within the Hindu religion are the direct result of his polemics.

Swami Dayananda had never taken defeat as an end in itself. Every defeat strengthened his resolve to fight on. He was ever conscious of the fact that he had to solve his problems for himself, by study and morel study; by trial and error, never accepting things from second hand sources.

Through the establishment of the new society, he wanted to incorporate all his reforms into Hinduism. He tried to break the domination of Brahmans in the society and the caste based distinction. He left the members of the society free to continue their ceremonial customs, traditions and rules of caste as long as they shun idolatry and accept the Vedic religion and regulation. He wanted to bring together all Hindus who agreed to dedicate themselves to religious and social reform with conviction that it comes through the revival of Vedic religion.

One should however note that he had no intention of creating a body of followers to propagate his ideas. He just wanted them to bring out reform from within themselves and society. He had a horror of gurudom and sectarianism; he did not want to place himself and his Samaj in such a category. Through the concept of Shuddhi, Dayananda gave a powerful Hindu counter challenge to the missionaries and it became a passion for many of later Hindu reformers and missionaries. The present debate on conversion needs to be seen in this perspective. Dayananda offered a response that was not just defensive, but aggressive. He affirmed the superiority of the monotheistic and non-idolatrous Vedic dharma over all other religions. To the educated who was ashamed of the exterior of his religion and the poor quality of his traditional leaders Brahmans, it must have been most acceptable to find that Dayananda put the religious leadership in to the hands of those who were the best qualified to undertake. He freed Hinduism from all those aspects that figured most in the missionary attack on Hinduism. To a rising elite the doctrine that caste should be attributed not by birth, but openly according to quality and merit, was welcomed by all.

**Personal reflections**

It is a myth that Hinduism is not a missionary movement; it is a myth that it has no mission and method to achieve its goal in life and society. The life and works of Swami Dayananda, and many others like him in the past and present, has broken that myth. It was a pity that the
Christian missionaries did not foresee this aspect of Hinduism and entered into unnecessary polemics and attacks. It may be one of the major reasons of their failures in winning considerable disciples for Christ from within Hinduism.

The mission and the missionary zeal of the Hindu is deeply penetrated into the life-pattern of each Hindu individual and family. It, in fact, has dissolved itself into every part of Hindu life and community that it has become its conscious, as well as unconscious, psyche. It is the content of real Hindu-ness of a Hindu. It is for this essential part of a Hindu that Hindu religion, as well as Hindu community, could survive the onslaught of many missionary religions and ideologies through out its history.

Swami Dayananda revealed both the positive as well as negative aspects and characteristics of Hindu missionary endeavour. In our endeavours in understanding Hindu missionary movements, we should be aware of the fact that these movements were the movements to reform the Hindu society from within, on the one hand, and to protect it, on the other, from the attacks of the Christian missionaries. They were, therefore, both defensive and offensive at the same time, without any exception to its enemies from within or without. Mission for Swami Dayanand, at the beginning, had been his own personal salvation. It was true to its classical Hindu spiritual culture, which is individualistic. Later, he moved to the communal and holistic understanding of salvation and involved himself in reforming the whole society. This is one aspect, the missionaries of the gospel, and those involved in theology of mission, should take note of.

Dayananda has brought forth the centrality of Scripture for any missionary activity. Back to the Vedas, the source of Hindu religious spirituality, was his dictum. He took Shastrartha method to convince his own people, theologians and pundits. One can only be convincing if he looks upon the scriptures for guidance and confirmation. One may not agree with his hermeneutics, yet one may not miss his sincerity in understanding the texts of the scripture. It is to be noted that this method is more effective and convincing in inter-religious dialogues and not in inter-religious dialogues. I understand, it was the anxiety of the some of the Christian missionaries that led them into Shastratha with the Swami and later with others. Thus, they entered into the region where they should have not. Their attacks strengthened the missionary goals of the Swami in reforming Hinduism from within. It was unfortunate that missionaries unnecessarily began to hurt the religious sensitivities of the Hindus by attacking their scriptures without much understanding and knowledge. We still continue to do so, either by completely denouncing them or trying to win them over by selectively adopting them. We need to have a clear understanding about the place of scriptures of people of other faiths in our theology of mission and missionary enterprises.

Method of polemic has now become an accepted norm of missionary methodology. It is time to take a break and critically analyse and evaluate the method. From the time of Dayananda it has taken a confrontational pastures, generating much hatred, creating misunderstanding, fuelling communalism, encouraging fundamentalism and destabilising the unity of a pluralistic society. It has produced a very different kind of literature, language and terms that has created a barrier for
the people and genuine flow of spiritual traditions from one to the other. This has been, to my understanding, one of the major factors that turned a genuine enquirer and seeker away from the path of Christ as presented by the evangelists and missionaries of the church. The method is still valid and useful in any attempt to reform and inform the society but the content, subject matter and presentation needs to be thoroughly evaluated and reformulated.

Shastratha is needed to reform and revitalise the people of God, but not to attack other religions. Bible studies and its application upon our social, political and religious lives of people is more effective than the polemical and apologetic writings of theologians and intelligentsia of our church and theological institutions. Most of our theological reflections are not Shastrartha at all, as some of the commentators upon the Gospels, Romans, John and Epistles have been, but philosophical and theological jargons. India is still awaiting that kind of Shastrartha. We need to pause and ponder, in the context of our recent experiences of anti-Christian propaganda in words and deeds, the danger such an approach poses for the defenceless but committed Christian in rural and urban India. Swami Dayananda got it back, we have got it back, and therefore there is no need to continue the same path any more. Polemic devoid of sincerity, loving concern and genuine Christ like authenticity cannot be polemic methodology for a Christian missionary. We need to be positive in our approach. Christ can be the best trend setter of true and genuine shastrartha. (cf. Discourse with Samaritan Woman and Nicadimus)

Imperative of missionary endeavour is to strive for the visible unity of the people of the faith. Sectarian Hinduism was the centre of attack from Swamui Dayananda from the very beginning of his missionary activities; for they were the hindrance to the unity of true Hinduism as reflected in the Vedas. He tried to organise ‘Sarvabhauma Sabha’ (Universal Council) for all shades of Hindus, though without much success. He later suggested a kind of Sangathana (Organisation), a loose confederation of sects and sub sects of Hindus. What this kid of organisation can do is quite evident from recent events in India. The same is true for the church in India, more so, in the context of numerous mission organisations engaged in missionary activities, often in completion with cross interests, thus weakening the mission of the church. It is unfortunate that the sectarian and denominational Christianity was introduced, and planted, in this part of the world, from the beginning of the history of the Church. It has often been Christianity without kerygma; Churchanity with doctrines, sects and denominations. The trend still continues to be so. Gospel in its purest form and structure has not been offered to the Indians. The missionary task is to rethink the content of Kerygma and offer the same with ‘the raw fact of Christ’ to the Indian inquisitive mind and the seekers of the truth.

Swami reintroduced shuddhi, a sacrament long forgotten, himself performed it to bring back converted Hindus into Hindu-fold and converting people from other faiths – Christians, Sikhs, Muslims and Jains. He also converted Vaishnavites into Shaivites. The conversion-re-conversion issue is very much alive today, being a part of political and religious agenda of the RSS affiliated organisations and the BJP. We need to re-theologise the concept. There is a need to re-interpret the Christian terms and concepts, such as, baptism. meta-noia, conversion etc., and give a new
meaning and understanding to the one who decides to follows Christ in a religiously pluralistic context. Some of the people in India do have difficulty in understanding the relationship between being a follower of Christ and being a member of the sectarian Church. Is it a causal and necessary relationship that cannot exist without the other, or the relationship is only a matter of choice of the follower? Church may think of newer forms of ritualistic and liturgical expression and formulation for entering into the fellowship of the followers of Christ, and into His Church. There are varieties of initiation rites in Indian religions; they can be Christionized and adopted as the outward sign of inward grace. We have to recognise that many followers of Christ may not wish to be a member of the visible Church, and the so-called ‘un-baptized Christians’ needs to be provided with some kind of recognition, spiritual succour and support from the established churches.

Mission fields have always provided an opportunity to venture into new forms of expression in presenting Christian gospel, new opportunities to rebuild communities, ministry and ecclesiology. The method of primitive Christians in organising themselves, forming their own liturgies and rituals, may be helpful for the missionaries to free themselves, and the neo-Christians, from the alien Church structures and ecclesiastical orders. The mother Church, and missionary organisations, can play nurturing and supporting roles, without colonising them by imposing their denominational/sectarian structures. The example of Dayananda in giving complete freedom and authority to every newly formed Arya Samaj, in forming their rules and constitution, may be a good example, which can be experimented in mission fields. This may help the genuine Indian Christian Communities form and grow.

One can only be conscious of the presence of mission ideologies and methods in other religions, especially the religions of Indic origin. The Hindu rishis, Jain Pravajaka, and Buddhist Bhikshuka have always been missionaries; they have their own methods and they always sought to establish a society of their own. We will be immensely helped in our task in mission if we open ourselves and learn from the experiences of these missionaries who had been no less successful than the Western Christian missionaries. The Indian input to the development of theology of mission is long over due. We are called to accomplish the goal that we set for ourselves, in providing new horizon in our understanding of Christian Mission in the Context of Indian realities.
Religious Fundamentalism and Nationalism: Reflections on Hindu perspective

Preliminary remarks
We, in India, since 1980s, have been watching, with deep concern, the unprecedented rise of religious fundamentalism, in almost all the major religious communities. The events, such as, conversions of few fishermen in South India, rise of militancy in the north-west, and tribal aspirations in the north-east, have all been ascribed to religious factors by the government in power. The ascendancy to political power of the parties owing allegiance to religious right, and the consequent reaction of the majority religious community has rung warning bells in the ears of minority religious communities throughout India. The assault on Golden temple and the destruction of Babri Masjid, and now Churches, attacks on Christian individuals and their religious institutions, and murder of priests and missionaries, are the events that cannot just be brushed aside by, what the politicians tend to say, 'rare and isolated cases'; rather they are the signs, on the one hand, of growing intolerance of the majority religious community, and the sign, on the other, of hardening of the inner core of their religious identity—Hindutva (Hindu-ness). This new phenomenon, and its implications, needs a serious study in order to meet the challenges it now poses to the other religious communities.

I am, at the moment, inclined to limit the scope of this presentation, leaving out the issues in their total aspects, from the point of view of religions that are seriously practiced, and adhered to, in India. I shall be limiting myself, for the sake of clarity and guidance for our meaningful discussion, to the understanding of fundamentalism and Nationalism in the Hindu religious tradition. This will help us to understand the rationale, characteristic and pattern of contemporary Hindu Nationalism.

The terms
One needs to be clear in his understanding of the term, "Hindu". Generally, it refers to a particular religion, and the adherent of that religion, which is a majority religion in India, and the State religion in Nepal. The term, in its broader understanding, also has cultural and sociological connotations and implications. It, therefore, should have to be differentiated from India and Indian. I need not to go into detail in discussing the etymological, political, social and cultural meanings of the term that are associated with it; they are indeed helpful in understanding the process of Indigenisation, inculturation, cross-cultural-communication and Indianization. We may just keep this in mind, in order to understand the confusion, and clarity as well, it creates in the minds of different people, and religious communities. One has to discern the meaning that is applied, and used, by different people of diverse orientations, from the context it is used.

Fundamentalism, in its positive aspect, is always an acceptable term, if it refers to 'going back to the fundamentals of one's religion and it's religiosity. Religious fundamentalism is often at odds with the generally accepted norms of human behaviour. The faithful followers attribute rationality to what is otherwise irrational; they tend to ascribe meaning to otherwise absurd. Last
century and a half is generally marked as the revival of Hinduism along these lines: reformation, missionary movements, and construction of temples abroad, exporting priests etc., to note a few. The negative aspect, however, does not bring cheers in the minds and lives of most of its own adherents, certainly not in the life of the minority religious communities. It tends to see the world from its own limited worldview of religio-cultural context, rejecting all the others, and imposes it upon others as well, whether they agree to it or not. Uniform personal laws, cow protection drive, attempts to change historical facts in educational books, Saraswati-vandana (singing of praises in honour of Saraswati, the goddess of learning and wisdom) are not just political issues. Theocratic religions and societies do not feel it necessary to apologize for the phenomenon; secularists and pluralists are expected to do so, as this trend is now most obviously marked in the religious communities found in pluralistic societies, such as India.

Nationalism is the most misunderstood and abused term in our context in India. It is an idea that is formed and developed in European setting, and then exported to India through liberal Indians and non-Indians. It first had aristocratic class affiliation, prior to French revolution, before opening way to the priests and princes under Luther's reformation, and finally, giving way to 'hoi polloi' during the French revolution. Nationalism, as commonly understood is the pride in and devotion to one's own nation and its interest. It is a sense of national identity, often associated with aspirations for national independence or separatism. It is best understood as a pattern of trends and tendencies arising within the complexities of history, which the present Indian Government and Council of Historical Research are trying to unfold. For the clarity of purpose, may I suggest to limit the use of the term within the context of "collective Hindu consciousness"! What we observe in the contemporary India is a growth of religious Nationalism centered around Hindu religious ideology as a fusion of patriotism with religious identity. Political Nationalism can take a back seat in our discussion here, though we cannot completely immunize ourselves from its role and implication in building up Hindu Nationalism. Religio-politico-utopia of 'Aryavrata' (Land of the Aryan), Bharat-varsha (the land of Bharat, a legendary and mythical king), and Rama-rajya (Kingdom of Lord Rama) is the guiding principle of such a Nationalism.

The terms quoted above provide a clue to understand Hindu Nationalism, first within the context of a race, then the integration of races and finally an extension of Divine providence. It will be helpful to keep in mind that Hindu Nationalism and Hindu fundamentalism are synonymous terms; they are two sides of the same term, Hindu.

**Brief survey of the History of Hindu Nationalism**

It is difficult to place the development of Hindu consciousness into a particular time in history; it has taken along time to develop, and exhibit itself, as such a consciousness in the collective and group identity of a very diversified people of such a vast land as Indian sub-continent. One can see it exhibiting itself in the hierarchical structures of social and religious institutions within
Hindu community. It is marked by differentiation within Hindu society that is stratified in its very own characteristic order, known as caste system (Varnashram Dharma / Jati Dharma). This system provided a process of assimilation of people of different races, classes and religions into one homogenous community. The basic principle of this system is acceptance of hierarchical order, controlled by a privileged few, called Brahmins, under the cover of Divine sanction. This idea was challenged by the Buddhists and Jain thinkers and reformers, but without much success; they only saw it codified in the Hindu Dharma-Shashtra (Hindu Personal and Social Laws) and their gradual acceptance in the fast emerging composite society.

This process came to a confusing halt with the arrival of Christian and Muslim trading communities in the first and seventh centuries in Christian era who refused to be integrated with the 'primitive communities' in accordance with the codified laws and preferred to preserve their own identities. The local inhabitants gradually accepted them as different 'nationalities'. The Zoroastrian, and Jewish communities were accepted so in the past, so also these new communities of traders and new settlers. Things developed for the worse once these communities began to accept the members of the 'primitive communities' through proselytizing, especially during the Muslim and European colonial expansion of the sub-continent. This is one of the major factors that gave rise to majority and minority communalism in India.

With the arrival of European colonizers, especially the British, introduced numerous changes into the subcontinent, which led to the growth of new India in the second half of nineteenth century. Inspired by the French and American revolutions, the principles of liberty, equality and self-governance became the corner stone for the new political Nationalism. The social and religious reformations of the nineteenth century within the Hindu community began to show a moderate version of religious Nationalism as well, with Raja Ram Mohan Roy and his Brahmo Samaj, Dayanand Saraswati and Arya Samaj, Vivekanand, Bipin Chandra Pal etc., taking the lead.

One may, however, note that the rise and growth of Indian form of Nationalism, from nineteenth century onward, rotated around two main axes. The first axis is Hinduism, which originated and developed in the country itself and which is the religion of the masses; and the second is Islam, which is of foreign origin and is the religion of a substantial minority. Both Hindus as well as Muslims used religion as a platform for mobilizing support for their social and political agendas, and by the end of the century, they began to compete with each other on communal terms, a trend that has become distinctive characteristic of Indian Nationalism. Demand for a status to Hindi or Urdu, cow slaughter, protection of personal laws, reservation in jobs, two-nation theory are but a few examples in this direction.

Leaving aside a discussion on Muslim Nationalism, let us concentrate our attention, for the present, on Hindu Nationalism.
a. Moderate Hindu Nationalism

When India was awakened from its centuries long slumber by the colonial and western cultural onslaught, certain Hindu leaders started making a fresh examination of their ancient heritage in order to adjust their faith to the needs and ideals of the modern age. The task was undertaken by the neo-Vedantins who were educated in Europe and influenced by the modern ideas of equality, liberty and fraternity. Most of them were attracted towards Nationalism during their struggle for the emancipation of their motherland since it was their main crutch in their fight against British imperialism. Nationalism exalts attachment and loyalty to a group while the Vedantic philosophy involves love of man, irrespective of caste, colour, creed and nationality, and attempts reconciliation on the lines laid down by the prophets of humanitarian and liberal schools of Nationalism of the West.

The neo-Vedantins undertook socio-religious reforms on the basis of Vedantic thought through which they evolved the aims and objectives of both Indian as well as Hindu national movement. They believed that its message would unite India in a common brotherhood and create favourable condition for her political emancipation. They strongly believed in the unity of God and equated spiritual freedom with the national freedom as well. They were greatly influenced by Islam, Christianity and Western rationalism and liberalism. They combined their doctrinal concepts and principles in order to denounce polytheism and idolatry into which Hinduism had degenerated. They attacked the social evils like caste system, child marriages, burning of widows, female infanticide; and advocated widow remarriage and promotion of equal status for men and women. They favoured English education, and many regarded British rule a necessary evil, as it was conducive to purify Hinduism, yet they were called nationalist of a special order.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833), Devendranath Tagore (1817-1907), Keshab Chandra Sen (1838-84) and Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade (1842-1901), Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), Aurobindo Ghosh (1872-1950) is associated with this kind of thinking. One can clearly mark the eclecticism at religious front, and a reforming zeal on the social front, in their kind of Nationalism based upon the principles of Vedantic thought and western liberalism.

b. Combative Hindu Nationalism

It was natural that a few would turn to the source of the Vedanta itself, the Vedas, and derive inspiration from it a different kind of Nationalism suited for the Hindu masses. It was Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824-83) and his Arya Samaj who presented a combative spirit of Hindu Nationalism in religion and politics. He encouraged Hindus to take pride in their race and culture, to turn back to Sanskrit and Vedas and advocated the abolition of non-Vedic practice of caste system. He also introduced the notion of Shuddhi, a sacrament for purification, for re-conversion of Christians and Muslims into Hindu fold, a rite that is now often used by the zealots. It identified the prosperity and future of India with the coalescence of Hinduism and Indian Nationalism and stigmatized the obstructions of the coalescence as an inexpiable sin. The attacks on the Christians and Muslims turned their religious Nationalism into extremism,
intolerance and militancy that became the hallmark of the activities of Rashtriya Swayam-Sevak Sangha (RSS) and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) in the recent times.

c. Political Hindu Nationalism
The rise of extremism in religion and politics in India began with the failures of moderates in Congress Party and the unrest among the youth who believed more in revolution than in the passing resolutions. Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920) was one of the first to oppose the liberals, moderates and progressives as compromisers and strongly believed that social reform cannot be brought about by the foreign government but could only be evolved through a process of organic growth in free India. His overall consideration was the promotion of solidarity among the Hindus; he, therefore, emphasized the superiority of Hinduism and advocated its revival, and identified Indian Nationalism and Hindu Nationalism with Hindu cultural traditions. He politicized the Ganapati festival and converted Shivaji into a cult figure for the purpose of uniting all Hindus under one umbrella to fight against the British rule. Tilak's ideology of Nationalism served both the religious and political objectives. He perused such ideals in order to mobilize and secure the support of the masses and to reanimate and redirect their militant traditions.

d. Integrated Nationalism of Mahatma Gandhi
No discussion on Nationalism would be complete without mentioning Mahatma Gandhi and his contribution in developing the Indian version of Nationalism over a period of more than three decades of active participation in freedom struggle. He considered freedom movement a religious movement designed to purge Indian political life of corruption, deceit, terrorism and the false notion of white superiority. For Gandhi, politics was religion-oriented and was based upon the principles of truth and non-violence. He identified truth with God, and treated religion as a search after truth, irrespective of the way the search is conducted, through science, particular religiosity or social service. This search includes the atheist and skeptic who do not hesitate to deny or doubt the existence of God. He believed that truth is the essence of all religions; therefore all religions are partially true. He taught that the adherents of religions should pay equal respect to the faiths of others and learn from them for their own spiritual growth. Although he preferred to call himself a "sanatani Hindu", he was not a fanatic. As a self-respecting person would do, he wanted freedom for himself and his countrymen, because it was only under the condition of freedom, genuine 'Swaraj' (self-rule) could be nourished and grown. He pointed out that Nationalism as such is not evil; it is the narrowness, selfishness, and exclusiveness that are the bane of modern nations that is evil. He rejected the militancy of fellow nationalists, and held that nations, like individuals, could only be made through the agony of cross, and no other way. It was for this rejection that he was strongly opposed by the Hindu, as well as Muslim, communal nationalists and fell prey to the hatred spread by them.
Gandhi also used the ideal of 'Swadeshi' (made within the country) for Nationalism. For him, this ideal involves love and sacrifice for the motherland, as well as our obligations to fellow humans. He also brought into focus the desire of the masses to be independent from any product that was produced outside India with a view to extract capital out of the country. He taught his countrymen to initiate programme for the economic and social up-liftment of the society, especially the poor and the villagers. He was deeply concerned with the poor and the oppressed and the untouchability practiced in Indian social system. In order to improve their lot, he set up village and cottage industries in which their labour and expertise can be made use for mutual benefit within the rural and urban societies. He would not compromise when the people are deprived of their legitimate rights. He, on the social front, fought a relentless fight for the abolition of untouchability till the very end of his life.

Gandhi's doctrine of Swadeshi reconciles Nationalism with internationalism on the same principles and ideals of altruism, love for humanity and equality of humans before God. For him, the ideals of Swadeshi, which involves love, and service of motherland, is not different in essence from our obligation to serve mankind since our capacity to serve humanity is conditioned by our knowledge of the world in which we live. He believed that service to humankind begins with serving our immediate neighbours and then extends beyond national and international borders. His patriotism is cosmopolitan as it includes certain universal values such as love and service. He, therefore, earnestly believed in the ideal of one world which could be attained only when all nations becomes free, when the smallest nation can feel as tall as the tallest; his Nationalism is only a step towards internationalism.

e. Pro-active/Narrow Hindu Nationalism
The extreme religious and militant Hindu Nationalism, Hindutva as it is commonly known now, inherited its theoretical and ideological shape in the thoughts and activities of V.D.Savarkar (1883-1966). The core of his ideology was the concept of Hindutva (literally, Hindu-ness, as such it encompasses the entire gamut of religious, cultural, social, political and linguistic aspect of Hindu life). In his book 'Hindutva', Savarkar makes a distinction between Hinduism and Hindutva on the basis of racial concept. A person is a Hindu, irrespective of religion he follows, if he has Hindu blood flowing in his veins. To him, Hindutva is a history and a tradition of the people of this land; any one out side of it is not a Hindu. One cannot be incorporated into Hindu fold as long as he has not adopted India's ancient culture, its history, inherited its blood and has come to look upon this land not only the land of his love but even of his worship.

The logical implications of such a definition is that neither a faith of foreign origin, nor a person of foreign ancestral origin can ever be a part of the concept of Hindutva, even if he has converted himself to Hinduism. So also one's love for India, or one's following Hindu faith, or one's subscribing to the Hindu caste system, is not enough for one to claim any part in the Hindu nation. One must love the Hindu culture, which includes Hindu religion, Sanskrit and other
Indian languages, Hindu architecture, laws, festivals etc., in order to be a Hindu. (Savarkar excludes Urdu, an indigenously developed language as well as English)

Another implication is that Indian Christians and Indian Muslims are not Hindus even if they are recent converts, are resident of this land and are racially pure in blood with Hindu parentage. It is so because they have adopted a new cult of foreign origin and ceased to own Hindu culture as whole. Now they belong to a cultural unit altogether different from the Hindu one. Their heroes and hero-worship, their fairs and festivals, their ideals and outlook of life, have ceased to be common with the Hindus. As such, their loyalty to India would remain suspect so long as they do not give up their faith in favour of Hinduism as defined by Savarkar. In the ultimate analysis of his religious outlook, Savarkar openly favours Hinduism as a superior faith compared to other religions, Indic or non-indic in origin.

Savarkar also has a political message to convey: Hindus of India must unite, for they have to fight their enemies, the non-Hindus. It has a very powerful message, for the inspiration of many, to establish hegemony of a religion, and a race, over others. In a nutshell, Hindutva is an extremely exclusivist racial concept which has the potential to destroy any pluralist society.

It is not only the temptation, but also the necessity of the contemporary situation in India, that a discussion on RSS be introduced here, as this organization, and its associates, are the torchbearers of the Hindutva.

RSS was founded by Dr. Keshav B. Hedgewar (1889-1940) in 1925 with the expressed mission to organize the Hindus on nationalist lines and to radicalize them to hasten the end of British rule in India. Although its objective was national regeneration, the broad means, methods, membership and strategy it employed to attain its objectives was, and is, to be the solidarity of the Hindu community. It also seeks to instill among its members a militant awareness of their common heritage and destiny. The ideology of Hindutva as practiced by the RSS is often associated with communalism, violence against and hatred for Muslims and Christian communities. Under the stewardship of M. S. Golwalkar (1906-73), RSS identified the Indian nation with the Hindus whom it regarded as indigenous sons of the Indian soil. He regarded Hinduism as the heart of the Indian nation and the philosophical principles of the Vedas as the soul of it. Many among the Hindus, he felt, were degenerated during the period of Muslim domination and denationalized through large-scale westernization during British rule. The revival of Hinduism and the revitalization of the Hindu society was his one and only creed, it was not difficult for him to locate the antagonists of the Hindus; the Muslims, the Christian missionaries and their followers, and the westernized Indians. In the vision of realization of Hindu Rashtra (Hindu Nation), Muslims and Christians would be reduced to secondary status of citizenship. He prescribed military structure for RSS and military discipline for its members.

RSS claims that it is a non-political social and cultural organization, and has overtly kept itself away from party politics of the Indian democratic system; but many doubt about the claim. In the past, as it is now, it has its own satellites, assuming the role of political fronts. Bhartiya Jan Sangha, a rightist Hindu party, founded by Shyama Prasad Mukherjee (1901-52) had links with
the RSS; Nehru called it 'an illegitimate child of RSS'. Today it is Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP). Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) is another associate of the RSS, which is known for its virulence towards the minority communities. Others are Bajarang Dal (BD) and the Shiva Sena.

Extremist Hindu Nationalism of RSS type has immensely contributed in vitiating the political and social atmosphere of the pluralistic Indian society. One can see the disturbing growth of an Indian version of fascism, communalism and religious fundamentalism within Hindu Nationalism that is counter to the real spirit of Hindu religious tradition.

Fascism tries to establish an authoritarian regime by violence, dictated unity and overall priority to military discipline, fighting spirit and ruthless action. It insisted in the principle that the weak would be conquered by the strong. In fascism, service to the nation is the supreme duty. Absolute devotion is instilled into all citizens by the use of all means of communication. Criticism of the government is not allowed, cultural or intellectual exchange with other countries is closely regulated. Fascism is a political attitude, which considers the authority of the nation, state, race, caste or community as the centre of life. In the Indian democratic system the fascist tendencies are slowly entering through the back door in the guise of communalism and religious fundamentalism, creating situations that result into communal and religious conflicts, harmony and riots. It was Indira Gandhi who unveiled her fascist face during emergency period (1975-77), but was resolutely defeated by the Indian electorates in general elections in 1977, apparently ending a threat of constitutional dictatorship. At present, the fascist elements are more apparent in the social system in the form of social hierarchy and in the Hindutva ideology of rightist forces.

The origin of communalism, Indian national consciousness and Hindu Nationalism are almost contemporary; they grew together in history. The communal issues emerged particularly during the partition of Bengal and Bengali renaissance, and ventilated through literature, religious societies and organizations and extremist ideology. They were also part and parcel of the 'divide and rule' policy of the government in power, and group managers of political parties. In the Indian political scenario, it has always proved to be a short cut to political success. First it was the Hindu-Muslim divide that formed the centre of communalism in Indian society for political gains, now almost all social and religious groups are prone to such divisions for narrow and instant political advantage.

Hindu Nationalism has also manifested its face through another characteristic that is associated with religious fundamentalism. As it is noted, fundamentalism, in the Indian context, may be understood as the other face of Nationalism. Many religious and political commentators saw in the Rama-janamabhumi-Babri Musjid dispute an indication of the emergence of militant Hindu fundamentalism in India along the lines of Muslim and Sikh fundamentalism. This may give rise to the emergence of other kind of fundamentalism in minority religious communities, such as Christians and the Buddhist, mainly due to the security concerns. The nature of Hindu religious fundamentalism is same as it is found elsewhere; it tends to justify absurdity and irrationality in religious faith, practice and tradition and claim the uniqueness and superiority of Hinduism over
and above all other religious traditions. It resists the idea of integrating the sacred and secular and holds that the religiosity of Hinduism permeates the life of a Hindu. As fundamentalists see it, extremism in defense of their faith is a virtue; moderation in defense of faith is an act of omission, and as such, a sin; group affiliation and pressure always acts as a source of both motivation and psychological support.

Hindu fundamentalism is rather a new phenomenon. It is sustained through four dogmatic assertions: first and foremost is the religious dogmatism that project the Hinduism as the only custodian of true spirituality; the second is scriptural dogmatism that accepts nothing but the Vedas as the depository of all the truth; third is the territorial dogmatism, asserting India as the land of God-realization; and the fourth is the communal dogmatism that asserts the theory of India for Hindus alone. Rejection of such assertions by majority of people, both Hindus and non-Hindus, causes a strong sense of alarm, frustration and feeling of being cornered in the minds of many sensitive and committed Hindus. The ever-growing western influence, increasing Muslim population and its growing influence through its association with the Arab wealth and power, conversion issues, empowering of the powerless by the Christian social and humanitarian service agencies and activists, spread of information technologies in every nook and corner of the country have convinced the Hindus that they have only themselves to support. Personal and social frustration among many Hindus fills their personalities with repressed impulses, such as selfishness, aggression, jealousy, cruelty, feelings of inferiority and hatred against minority communities, expression of which can only invite social censure, but it turns into honourable and heroic, once they are directed against the minorities for the cause of the fundamentalists. The cause behind the demolition of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, riots in Bombay and other places against the Muslim community, gruesome murder of the Steins family, murders of Christian priest and nuns, attacks on the Christian institutions and in-habitats are the expressions of such latent and suppressed feelings. The talks of conversion debates and anti-conversion bills are nothing but the expression of Hindu frustration, intolerance and envy to the increasing population of Buddhist, Christian, Muslim and Sikh communities and their support for the cause of the down-trodden.

Modern, and pro-active, Hindu Nationalism, with the supportive encouragement of the sympathetic government, is showing its face as a missionary religion characterized by aggressive passions, enthusiasm, numerical obsession and militancy. At the national level, it aims is to consolidate Hindu power by eliminating Christianity and Islam, in order to establish a Hindu nation for Hindus only, replacing all ideologies with Hindu spiritualism and culture. In the global context, their mission is to assert the uniqueness and universalism of Hinduism as the universal remedy for global problems and propagate Hindu culture. In order to fulfill their mission Hindu militants have recently adopted the method of confrontation, combat and conquest. They have realized that they cannot achieve their goals unless Hindus are physically, mentally and spiritually trained, for which history is being re-written, training camps organized,
membership drive undertaken, religious passions aroused, and minority communities attacked and discredited.

3. **Reflections**

Christian Church and Christians in India have arrived at a crossroad from where they have to make a decision in favour of, or against, their continued witness of faith to their community and nation. The situation is becoming more complex as sporadic acts of violence on the personnel and properties of Christians still continues, along with vicious propaganda of *Hindutva* forces; ministers, Chief Ministers and Prime-Minister are speaking in different tones and language; Christians are charged with internal conflicts and strife; foreign-hand-theory is quite handy and convincing for all kinds of explanation for an act of terrorism.

The Christian community in India has always been very quiet and docile community; it takes a long time to react to the challenges it faces, even if they are annihilating. Last time, it showed its strength and resolve was the time when the famous Tyagi Bill, banning conversion, was introduced in the Indian Parliament for enactment. This time too, it did not, at first, reacted when a Church at Dang, a rural village in Gujarat, was burnt down and the property of the poor and helpless Christian villagers were destroyed. It was Dr. Rajaratnam who, as the President of National Council of Churches, took note of the incident and rushed to the place to take stock of the things and to show solidarity of the national Churches with the victims of communal hatred. Not only there but elsewhere too he was there to be with the suffering Christian communities. It was NCCI who brought into focus the plight of Dalit and tribal Christians and provided leadership in encountering the propaganda of the *Hindutva* forces. Church and Christians in India are now more sensitive to the plight of fellow-believers anywhere in the country than they were in the past.

Lack of unity and denominational communalism in the Indian Churches are still painful facts that need to be seriously considered. Unity-in-diversity which has been a cementing principle of composite Indian culture can provide us a way to respect each other's historical and spiritual traditions. The principle itself has now been challenged by the descendents of its propounders, a support, and adoption, by a so-called alien and foreign faith will surely bring back normalcy in the most strife stricken Indian society. We failed our people in the recent events that shook the conscience of all the nationalists and secular people of our nation. The leaders of the Evangelicals, Roman Catholic, Church of South India (CSI), Church of North India (CNI) and other denominations were speaking in different tones and were issuing contradictory statements. It took much persuasion, on the part of NCCI and its team of committed workers, to bring the leaders of different Christian traditions together to present an united face of the Church at the time of a grave crisis in the life of Indian Church.

We have yet to learn to stand in solidarity with the people of other faiths on the issues that concern them and lend our support to them. There was not much a whisper when the Golden Temple of the Sikhs was attacked, or the Babri Masjid was raged to the ground, or temples were
pulled down and innocents belonging to the religious communities were killed in communal riots. We did not seek the support of other religious communities, like the Muslims, neo-Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and others who are also missionary religions when Tyagi bill was introduced, and isolated ourselves from other religious communities. Many are surprised to find so much sympathy and support from other religious communities, press and individual to the Christian cause after the manifestation of violent forces of militant Hindutva activists. This spirit of solidarity needs to be preserved, maintained and strengthened in order to preserve the unity and secular character of our nation. The ecumenicity of religions in India is the need of the time in order to preserve it from the clutches of bigot and fundamentalist forces. The NCCI and its associate churches should play a key role in evolving, and strengthening, that ecumenicity.

There is much for us to learn from other religious communities, and, at the same time, be sensitive to their feelings and emotions. The words, like 'salvation army', 'conquering for Christ', 'winning the souls', 'every home crusade', 'operation mobilization', can be taken to be same as an attitude of the colonial power and as aggressive as the declaration of 'holy war' against other religious communities. An excuse for aggressive reaction that followed was, thus, provided by such an approach of many of our faithful missionaries of the Gospel. Mission agenda-2000 that was released, with much enthusiasm and pomp and show, did not go well with the majority religious community. They felt that the aggressive evangelism in the form of a programme to reach every village with the message of Christ and providing Bible to every family in India has to be met with the same aggression and show of strength. Thus, a detailed programme was chalked out by different religious fanatic groups, in the form of disruption of evangelical meetings, blocking the ways of the missionaries, harassing the missionaries, burning their literature, attacking, and even killing, the preacher of the Gospel, in order to counter Christian missionary endeavors.

Pluralism, of every shade and form, is a fact of life in our situation in India, so also secularism. This fact is noted and given due consideration in our Constitution, political institutions and parliamentary democratic systems of governance. Articles 15 and 25 gives freedom to every citizen to practice, propagate and protect his way of life and traditions. In the context of atrocities on the minority communities these basic rights are being denied to a part of its citizen, and these rights are to be restored to them. This is not only the responsibility of the minority community but the responsibility of every citizen. The role of communicator is to inform, educate and make them sensitive to the issues so that they may protect their, as well as other's, rights and privileges.

Empowerments of the powerless, voice of the voiceless, and strengthening the weak have been the motives of Christian service agencies and Non-government organizations (NGO). The Hindutva forces have targeted Christian organizations in the pretext of their foreign missionary oriented programmes as they are in the forefront in their programmes for educating the uneducated, freeing the bonded labourers, and emancipation programmes for the Dalits, women and tribal. These are considered anti-national activities by these forces. Christian
communicators need to set right the records and help to filter the correct information through his knowledge, and possession, of information technology. Globalization is in the process of annihilating Nationalism and internationalism, and turning them into some sort of "ism" that is yet to emerge. The tendency now is to import one's own brand of 'ism' into the global market. Hindu Nationalism, in the form of revival of Hinduism with missionary zeal, is preparing itself to launch its programmes for Hindus in Diaspora. It is estimated that the Hindus in Diaspora are poring more Dollars and Deutsch Marks for strengthening Hindutva forces and programmes than the overseas Christian missionary organizations. This thrust of new Hindu missionary consciousness, and its implications, is an area that requires further studies and analysis.

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AN EXPLORATION INTO THE CHRISTOLOGY OF GANDHI

Jesus Christ is the center of devotion and commitment of millions of people throughout the world, within the institutionalized churches as well as outside of them. It is recognized, even in the proto-/primitive church, that there are secret disciples, sympathizers and proselytes, 'Churchless Christians', 'un-baptized Christians', and they may be as many as active and inactive members of the Christian population of the world. Mahatma Gandhi may be one among them, though he emphatically insisted that he is, first and foremost, a 'sanatani' Hindu. It is within this context, and from 'sanatani' periscope, his Christology has to be looked into, rather than from the dogmatic and doctrinal Christian point of view, in order to understand, and estimate, his contribution towards indigenous expressions of Christ. It has its own advantage, which has, so far, not been recognized, and we propose to make an effort to discover this in this study.

Eastern Christianity in India, though introduced soon after the end of the earthly life of Jesus Christ, contained itself, from its very inception in this sub-continent, with a few indigenous followers. It is the Western Christianity that came with the evangelical and missionary zeal to win over India for Christ which can be ascribed for the rapid and numerical expansion of Christianity in this continent. Historically speaking, the numerical and indigenous expansion of Christian faith in India was the direct result of missionary zeal of Western Christianity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the process of transportation, Christianity was given in lock, stock and barrel, the western edition of scripture, dogmas, doctrines, ritual, liturgy, catechism, institution, church governance, and everything that is associated and developed in Christianity up to that time in the 'home-churches'. No wonder one hears the complaint that India has not produced any worthwhile heresy, theology of its own or commentary on the Bible, even on the Gospel of John which is considered closer to Indian mysticism. While searching for an explanation, one may grudgingly agree with Chenchaiah that the 'raw fact of Christ' was not offered to the religious minded Indians who could have taken him as per their needs and religious aspirations.

In spite of this, there were many who encountered Christ on the Indian roads and have tried to understand him in their own ways. They wrestled with the 'raw fact of Christ' and developed their own Christology quite different from the ones that would have been granted 'imprimatur' of the official Church. Raja Rammohan Roy, Keshev Chandra Sen Rabindra Nath Tagore and Mani Lal Parekh in the Brahmo tradition, Dayananda Saraswati and his Arya Samaj tradition, Swaimi Vivekananda and his Ramakrishana tradition, and Gandhi, Radhakrishnan and neo-

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2 E.g. Joseph of Arimathea (Jn. 19:38)
3 For detailed discussion, see Hoeffer, Churchless Christianity, Chennai: Gurukul Lutheran Theological College & Research Institute.
4 Young India, October 6, 1921
vedantic and nationalist tradition can be mentioned among those who have been pioneers in contributing towards the development of Christian theology in Indian crucible.

Let us now turn to the Gandhi's understanding of Christ and, in the process, evaluate his contribution towards an evolving Christology in Indian setting. We should have to be aware, at the very outset of this study, that one has to first understand his 'theological circle' without imposing one's own upon his; this freedom is necessary in order to appreciate the input he, or for that matter others, can provide for our own understanding of the same Reality. In this effort, we are first invited to explore that circle.

A word of clarification may be helpful; we will be using the terms, Gandhi and Gandhian, synonymously, avoiding the confusion that may crept in with the later thought developed by the followers and scholars of Gandhi.

**Understanding Gandhi's faith**

As noted above, Gandhi would prefer to call himself a 'sanatani Hindu'. It may be helpful if we take his own statement in understanding his religion: ‘I call myself a sanatani Hindu, because I believe in the Vedas, Upanishads, the Puranas and the writings left by the holy reformers. This belief does not require me to accept as authentic everything that passes as Shastras. I reject everything that contradicts the fundamental principles of morality. I am not required to accept the ipse dixit, or the interpretations of Pandits. Above all, I call myself a Sanatani Hindu, so long as the Hindu society in general accepts me as such. In a concrete manner, he is a Hindu who believes in God, in immortality of the soul, transmigration, the law of Karma and Moksha, and who tries to preach Truth and Ahimsa in daily life, and therefore, practices cow-protection in its widest sense and understands and tries to act according to the Law of varnashrama.5

Here we find him defining his faith as 'Sanatani' Hindu along with his definition and understanding of the Hindu religion. As a deeply religious person, and a pragmatic politician, he often accepts both, sometimes oscillates between them, or rejects the other as per the demands of the situation. It is for this reason, he reserves his right of freedom to accept or reject Scriptural authority and anything that contradicts the fundamental principles of morality, and thus liberated his religion from narrowness and bigotry. It is also interesting to note that his calling himself a Sanatani Hindu is conditioned by the acceptance of Hindu society in general.

One cannot fail to note the 'scriptural inclusivism' of Gandhi; he considers not only Veda as scripture, but also Upanishads, Puranas and writings of the holy reformers. Upanishads as a part of Veda, of course, does form the 'Shruti', revelatory tradition of the Hindu scriptures, but not the Puranas, which is a part of 'smriti', reflective tradition. Most of the Hindu devotional and religious mysticism, Bhakti tradition as it is commonly understood, has its source in Puranic literature. Swami Dayananda Saraswati (1824-83), the founder of Arya Samaj, has been successful in propagating 'scriptural exclusivism' to the Hindus and thus laid the foundation of

5 (All Religions Are True, cited henceforth as ARAT, p. 16; Young India, Oct. 14, 1926)
Hindu nationalism based on the exclusive principles. However, his exclusion of 'smriti' literatures form the purview of scriptures, with some of his severest critique, did not go well with the Sanatani Hindus. Gandhi re-established the 'sanatani' position, based upon the inclusive principles, with much force and acceptance. It is this principle, which is the directive principle of all his activities in life - political, religious, social and personal.

**Gandhian Epistemology**

Gandhi's ways of knowing, so thoroughly demonstrated in his autobiography, is through experiments and experiences at personal level; it is Perceptual Epistemology. Knowing, for him, is a process gained experientially through trial and error method. Christians, for example, led him to Christianity and Bible, which, in turn to a discovery of Christ. As he recalls: 'Even when I was 18, I came in touch with good Christians in London. Before that I had come in touch with what I then used to call 'beef and beer-bottle Christianity', for these were regarded as the indispensable criteria of a man becoming a Christian, with also a third thing, namely, adoption of a European style of dress...I came across good Christian there who place Bible in my hands...I have since grown to this belief that Christianity is as good and as true a religion as my own.'

As such, it is subject to changes and revisions, making it difficult to say, with certain amount of surety, what would have been his final conclusion and definite views on certain subjects, even if they were clearly stated. It is prudent, therefore, to guard oneself from claiming any finality on the Gandhian thought. This open-ness of Gandhi, however, is a blessing in disguise for the Gandhians, for they can go on experimenting with the truth, thus, making it contemporary and contextual. There are, however, a few views that reflect his convictions, and they can be considered as ultimate criteria of his judgment in life and knowledge.

What is arrived at with his experimentation and experience is Truth. This truth, therefore, is the core of Gandhi's epistemology. Moreover, Truth, for Gandhi, is absolute and ultimate criterion of everything, and he un-waveringly asserts its supremacy in no uncertain way: 'Truth is superior to everything, and I reject what conflicts with it'.

We will have to look into it from different perspectives- epistemological, theological, philosophical, and moral, to mention a few, in order to gain some insights into the complex mind of Gandhi. In this section, we shall limit ourselves to the epistemological foundation of Gandhian theology/philosophy of religion.

Gandhi proposes three criteria upon which truth is founded, and he sees no difficulty in examining any truth-claims made on behalf of religions. They are reason, non-violence and faith. Reason is a criterion upon which truth of any matter has to be judged: 'And, on matters which can be reasoned out, that which conflicts with reason must also be rejected'. Non-Violence is another criterion of truth, as he asserts: '...that which is in conflict with non-violence should be rejected'. One can note that Gandhi includes an ethical principle as a

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6 (ARAT, p. 45: Harijan, cited henceforth as H, March 6, 1937).
7 (ARAT, p. 47: H, March 6, 1937)
8 (ARAT, p. 47: H, March 6, 1937)
criterion of truth. This inclusion is in consistence with his understanding of Truth, which is a philosophical-ethical principle.

Faith is a surprise addition to the rational and ethical criteria of truth to give credence to those matters, which cannot be reasoned out. This faith is transcendental and can be grasped only through sixth sense: '…there are subjects where reason cannot take us far and we have to accept things on faith. Faith then does not contradict reason, but transcends it. Faith is a kind of sixth sense which works in cases which are without the purview of reason.  

Gandhian Hermeneutics

Critical theory of inspiration of the scriptures is the option Gandhi chooses while rejecting the inspiration theory of the scriptures as a whole; '…I do not regard every word of the Bible as the inspired word of God, even as I do not regard every word of the Vedas or the Quran as inspired'.  He would, rather, have it qualified: 'the sum total of each of these books is certainly inspired, but I miss that inspiration in many of the things taken individually'.  He is, thus, providing support to a liberal and critical approach to the scriptures at a time when orthodoxy was gaining some ground in the Indian religious scene of the time.

Principle of Literalism in interpretation will be the one Gandhi would like to stick with. Any material interpretation of the words, phrases or concepts, he would reject, though he is not averse to figurative and metaphorical interpretation. Rejecting the Christological title, 'only begotten Son of God' and interpreting it in his own way, he points out that 'Metaphorically, we are all begotten sons of God, but for each of us there may be different begotten sons of God in a special sense'.  It is the application of this principle of literal interpretation, in the context of the phrase 'only begotten son of God' that he remarks: 'That epithet, in its material interpretation, is quite unacceptable'.

Principle of Doctrinal Bias also plays an important part in the hermeneutics of Gandhi. He, however, would not mind to give allowance to the personal doctrinal bias to certain interpretation of the scriptures. One such case is the issue of violence and non-violence. He holds fast his faith in non-violence, which he derives from the Gita, while acknowledging that others can find support for violence in the same Gita. The same, he observes, may be true with the interpretations of the Bible and the Quran where one can settle the issue either way, but he would go along with the supporters of the non-violence. He is aware that some may still have the freedom to opt for the non-violence on the basis of their interpretation of the scriptures; yet, he would not opt for that interpretation. On the specific of prescription of violence in the Quran,

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10 (ARAT, p.47; H, March 6, 1937).
12 (ARAT, p. 46: H, March 6, 1937)
he is firm on his resolve: 'But if the worst come to the worst, and if I came to the conclusion that the Quran teaches violence, I would still reject violence...'  

Principle of Autonomy has an important role to play in Gandhi's ways of interpretation to the scriptures. He falls back to this principle whenever he feels that there are contradictions, and differences, in interpretation of certain scriptural texts or concepts. The principle of doctrinal bias, which he proposes, is not helpful in settling the issue; in fact, it encourages more discords, and has to be based on firmer rational ground. This firmer rational ground is the principle of autonomy, and he makes it independent of scriptures. He claims that autonomy to non-violence, as he asserts: 'It is enough that my non-violence is independent of the sanction of scriptures'.

**Theology of Religion**

The world of plurality, of difference, of numerous shapes and forms, is a fact of life that is easily recognized and accepted by Gandhi. The same is true with religion: 'If we search, we may find as many religions as there are men'. There should not be any difficulty in accepting this proposition as this is the fact of our situation and context, but difficulty arises when one happens to claim superiority over others and absoluteness of his religion, branding others relative and false. In the emotional and communal attachment to one's own religious tradition, one tends to forget that 'Differences in the world there have been and will be', and unnecessarily becomes judgmental. Gandhi tries to be rational and appeals to common-sense.

It is from this pluralistic point of world-view that Gandhi looks at other religions and expresses his reservations against those, like Christianity, who claim themselves to be the true religions: 'I would also dispute the claim that Christianity is the only true religion. It is also a true religion, a noble religion, and along with other religions it has contributed to raise the moral height of mankind'.

This, 'as good and true a religion as my own', as noted in the previous section, led him to further enquiry and he, in the course of his own struggles, developed his own theology of religion, one of whose foundation is expressed in this statement: '...there was no such thing as only one true religion and every other false. There is no religion that is absolutely perfect. All are equally imperfect or, more or less, perfect'.

The equality of religions with respect to perfection and imperfection, truth and falsehood is the cornerstone of his theology of religion, as he himself asserts and explains: 'All religions are true and equal. That, however, is not to say that they are equally true in religious terms or are

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16 (ARAT, p. 48: H, March 6, 1937)
17 (ARAT, p.46: Chandrashanker Shukla, Conversations of Gandhiji, Bombay; Vohra & Co, p. 85, cited as CG).
18 (ARAT, p46: CG, p.85
19 (ARAT, p46: H, March 6, 1937)
20 (ARAT, 45)
21 (ARAT, p. 45; H, March 6, 1937).
absolutely true. Another man's religion is true for him, as mine is for me. I cannot be a judge of his religion. That is my fundamental position'.

It is on this principle, and 'fundamental position', that he disputes the claim of any religion as the only true religion, and resists the temptation of becoming a judge in the disputes. His theology of religion is guided by three criteria: equality in truth claims, validity of one's own religion and relativity of judgment. One can see the influence of Jain epistemology, with its insistence on principle of relativity (Anekantavada), evolving as the criteria upon which Gandhi worked out inter-religion relationships.

Gandhi, therefore, naturally approves a belief in the relativity of Truth (God and Truth, as we see later, are synonymous in Gandhian thought). His argument is simple: 'Hundreds of men are merely striving to know the truth. They will put the Truth in their own way. No two men will put it in identical terms...If I am a seeker of Truth, it is quite sufficient for me. I cannot say that because I have seen God in this way, the whole world must see Him in that way'.

The relativity of religions is almost a creed for Gandhi. Principle of relativity, as applied to religions, does not encourage the negative attitude that is associated with the comparative study of religions as developed in some of the western theological schools of thought. Gandhi himself was a keen student of religions, but he distaste comparative approach that casts aspersion to one or the other religion, sits on judgment over others, and claims superiority/ inferiority on behalf of his/other religion. Studies of religions brings forth the fact that we lack complete historical data to rely upon in cases of religions, ancient as well as modern, apart from the fact to find a suitable person to judge and arbitrate between the conflicting claims on behalf of a particular religion or a particular religious personality. Doctrinal superiority that can be a corollary to his principle of autonomy is rejected by it propounder, if so applied in the case of religions: 'But if the worst come to the worst, and if I came to the conclusion that the Quran teaches violence, I would still reject violence; but I would not, therefore, say that the Bible is superior to Quran or that Mohammed is inferior to Jesus. It is not my function to judge Mohammed and Jesus'.

**Jivan-mukta as Christology**

Gandhiji has deep respect for Jesus, as he expresses himself: (If you mean the living Christ) then I can say that Jesus occupies in my heart the place of one of the greatest teachers who have made a considerable influence on my life. Leave the Christians alone for the present; I shall say to the Hindus that your life will be incomplete unless you reverently study the teachings of Jesus. He regarded Jesus as 'a great teacher of humanity' but not the 'begotten son of God', who does not need any prophecies and miracles for such a conviction: 'I regard Jesus as a great teacher of...

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22 (ARAT, p. 46-47: CG p. 85
23 (ARAT, p. 46: GC, p.85).
25 ARAT, p.51
humanity, but do not regard him as the only begotten son of God… I do not need either the prophecies or the miracles to establish Jesus' greatness as a teacher. Nothing can be more miraculous than the three years of his ministry'.

He has a problem with the phrase, 'the only begotten son of God' as applied only to Jesus, and not to other humans. But has a problem in assigning him a special place as 'Son of God': 'I do not take literally true the text that Jesus is the only begotten son of God'. Here, he applies reason as criteria of truth to discern irrationality in such claim. It is absurd to him, as it was to the Islamic theologians and Hindu reformers, that God can not marry and beget children. Hence he rejected any material interpretation to the epithet. He would like to see the word 'son' in a figurative and metaphorical sense, and would not mind to use the title, 'begotten son of God' for anyone who stands in the position of Jesus.

He, however, suggests to make a distinction between ordinary sons of God, which would include all humans- man and women- and spiritually superior humans, like Jesus, Chaitanya and others; the first can be classed as the 'children of God', while the second, 'the sons of God'. Moreover, as he argues, "God can not be exclusive Father and I cannot ascribe exclusive divinity to Jesus. He is as divine as Krishna or Rama or Mahammed or Zoroaster." Mahatma Gandhi was not convinced that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God. If this is so, then all men are equally sons of God; if he is divine, he is as divine as Krishna, Rama or other religious figures. It is irrational to think of a selected one to be the only begotten son. Gandhi admitted Jesus as a great teacher of humanity, but not as the only begotten Son of God. He, however, admits that Jesus was the only begotten Son of God for his devotees. Jesus was nearest to God in his time. But this should not be the case with him; his faith in Jesus need not be the faith of Jesus' devotees. He maintained that the only begotten Son of God could be understood and accepted only as the spiritual birth and not as a physical event. Jesus, for him, was nearer to perfection, but not so perfect as to take the place of God.

Gandhi rejected the idea of 'graded divinity' on the criteria of reason. Hindu theology propounds its own theory/theology of incarnation, with its application upon the religious leaders, such as Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha, Rama and Krishna. He does not find much historical data available to decide the case in favor of higher divinity in case of any one of them. But, then, who would qualify to take a case of such magnitude, as he muses: 'to say that Jesus was 99 percent divine, and Mohammed 50 percent and Krishna 10 percent, is to arrogate to oneself a function which really does not belong to me'. In place of 'graded divinity', he agrees with the general Vedantic idea of Jeevan-mukta, 'perfectibility' of human nature which can be as near to perfection, in human life, as possible, but not absolutely perfect as that of God. Human perfection, in his opinion, cannot be equated with the perfection of God; for doing so will deny God's superiority

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27 (ARAT, p.45: Harijan, cited henceforth as H, March 6, 1937)
28 (ARAT, p.45: H March 6, 1937)
over humans. Presenting his own theory of human perfection, he says: 'Being necessarily limited by the bonds of flesh, we can attain perfection only after dissolution of body. Therefore, God alone is absolutely perfect.' Even then, Gandhi's problem is not yet fully resolved; and he has to differentiate perfection of humans at two levels, human and divine, without working out their co-relation. Possibility of perfection in human life is denied on the ground of flesh-body relationship and passed on to another dimension of life after death where this relationship does not exist.

**Incarnation, cross and resurrection**

Incarnation brings God among human, and it is a belief that is natural to Indian mind, as natural as Gandhi' assertion that 'he appears in many shapes and forms'. Incarnation, thus, is the limitation wrought upon himself by God, making death, on account of flesh-body relational-ship, natural to him: 'when he descends to earth, He, of His own accord, limits Himself. Jesus died on the cross because he was limited by the flesh'. It is theologians who propose so many theories with fancy ideas to impute their limitation to God, make him to copy humans and bring Him into their frame of time. The moment we say that God is incarnated in this or that historical concrete instance, the purity of God is defiled because he is now subject to the limitation of matter, time and space. In incarnation, history, imagination and truth get so inextricably mixed up that it is next to impossible to disentangle it.

Gandhi made a distinction between the Jesus of history and Jesus whom Christian believe: In as much as God is omnipresent, he dwells within every human being: all may, therefore, be said to be incarnations of him. Rama and Krishna are called the incarnations of God because we attribute divine qualities to them. In truth they are creations of man's imagination. The truth is that God is a living force. He is the essence of life. He is pure and undefiled consciousness. He is eternal.

Gandhi maintained that there is a difference between the name and reality of God. According to his interpretation, Jesus, whose title was Christ, could not be experienced by a believer. It is Christ as the name for God that could be experienced. This Christ, which is the name or symbol for God, is closer to the conception or imagination of man than the historical, concrete Jesus of Christianity.

Gandhi interpreted the cross and resurrection in symbolic and metaphoric language. He held that, as birth is an eternal event, so is the cross an eternal event in our stormy life. One dare not think of birth without death on the cross. The living Christ means the living cross. Without the cross, life is a living death:

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30 (ARAT, p. 49; H, April 17, 1937).
31 (ARAT, p.46: Mahadev Desai: Gandhi in Ceylon, Madras: S. Ganesan, p.85)
32 (ARAT, p. 49: H, April, 17, 1937)
Person of Jesus is a living reality in the sense of other prophets and teachers. They affect us because they are still living. Jesus, thus, is not living in a special sense of the word, distinguished from others. He proposes that the claim of Christians that Jesus lives and rules their life can be understood in this sense: 'It is not Jesus of history who really rules the lives of Christians; it is the Jesus of their imagination who does so. The God of my imagination rules my life and not the God of your imagination'.

**Miracles**

Unlike masses that ascribe divinity to any one who performs miracles, Gandhi refuses to accept 'miracles' as the criteria of divinity. They, he argues, may be illusions created by a magician, and no one would accept anyone who is a magician as savior of the world. Miracles, moreover, are contrary to natural laws; hence, it is irrational to accept them: 'the Laws of Nature are changeless, and there are no miracles in the sense of infringement or interruption of Nature's laws'. The Indian religious tradition and belief, on the other hand, recognizes that humans can have, or can attain miraculous powers through austerity, and as a gift of God. Gandhi, therefore, has no objection in accepting Jesus a Yogi with psychic powers and the one who was filled with the love for humanity. One can clearly see that Gandhi is taking the position of Advaitin in propounding his theory. But he is not an 'Advaitin' of Samkara's mould.

**Jesus the Christ, the Prince of all Satyagrahis**

Mahatma Gandhi considered Jesus Christ as the Prince of all satyagrahis and often referred to satyagraha as to the 'Way of the Cross'. It is in this context, one should look upon his understanding of Jesus as Christ.

Concept of truth, as it is noted, is the key to understand life and works of Mahatma Gandhi. He has subtitled his autobiography as an experiment with truth and had tried to live according to its dictate at whatever cost he had to pay, including the bullet of an assassin. By truth, he meant God, and he described his religion, and his God, as Truth: 'I often described my religion as Truth. Of late, instead of saying God is Truth, I have been saying Truth is God in order more fully to define my religion'. This identification of Truth with God made to assert: 'to me, God is Truth and Love, God is ethics and morality, God is fearlessness. God is the source of light and life and yet He is beyond all these: God is conscience'. Truth is not a personal notion; it does not have any a personal reference; it is universal, and as such, has universal reference: it is not my truth, but is also your truth. By this identification of God of religion with the truth of philosophy and epistemology, morality and ethics, Gandhi broke the ice with those seekers of truth who do not wish to identify themselves with any religion of the world; with those who are agnostics, atheists

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34 Gandhi, All religions are true. p. 64
35 ibid., p.65
36 (ARAT, p. 50: H, April 17, 1937).
37 Radhakrishnan and Muirhead: contemporary Indian Philosophy, p.21
38 Young India, 5,8. 1925.
and do not wish to identify themselves with a particular and organized religion. Truth is anti-
thesis of \textit{asatya}, Untruth, falsehood; \textit{asat} means "non-existent"; and \textit{satya} means "that which is". Therefore, 'If untruth does not so much as exist, its victory is out of the question. And Truth being "that which is" can never be destroyed\textsuperscript{39}. Hence he decided to cling to it whatever may befall on him. This insistence upon Truth is \textit{Satyagraha}.

Gandhi coined the term, '\textit{styaagraha}', to explain his method of fighting injustices by soul-force. Any fight will involve violence, more so fighting with the injustices and the structures of injustices. To rule out such a possibility, he included '\textit{ahimsa}', non-violence as the essential part of satyagraha. His \textit{ahimsa} is not passive, limited to mere abstinence from harming others in thought word and deed of their own, or through others; it is a way of life, expressing love and concern for others, even to enemies. Satyagraha is the force of the soul; it is the moral force of a person who is established in Truth and loving concerns for the protection of life of others. As such, it cannot be associated with a week and cowardice. Not killing a tiger to protect the helpless old, women and children is not \textit{ahimsa}, but to fight and kill the tiger is force of the soul; not to send an old cow to the slaughter house and let her die of natural death is \textit{ahimsa}, but to provide protection and feed is the moral force. It is this principle that gave him a legitimate and effective weapon to use against the injust structures of political, social and religious life of the country.

\textit{Satya} and \textit{Ahimsa} are great principles for one to regulate his life, but they are mere ideals if they cannot be practiced in life. One often seeks to find someone who has really lived a life in perfect harmony with these principles. Mahatma found that person in Jesus Christ, and his teachings as found in the Sermon of the Mount: ' the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount competes, almost on equal terms, with the Bhagavad-Gita for the domination of my heart. It is that sermon which has endeared Jesus to me….The gentle figure of Christ, so, patient, so kind, so loving, so full of forgiveness that he taught his followers not to retaliate when abused or struck but to turn the other cheek - it was a beautiful example, I thought, of the perfect man\textsuperscript{40}.  

\textbf{Jesus in the words of Gandhi\textsuperscript{41}}

My regard for the life of Jesus is indeed very great. His ethical teaching, his common sense, his sacrifice, commands my reverence. But I do not accept the orthodox teaching that Jesus was or is God incarnate in the accepted sense, or that he was or is the only Son of God. I do not believe in the doctrine of appropriation of another's merit. His sacrifice is a type and an example for us. Every one of us has to be crucified for salvation. My interpretation in other words is that Jesus' own life is the key of his nearness to God; that he expressed, as no other could, the spirit and will of God. It is in this sense that I see Him and

\textsuperscript{39} C.F.Andrews (ed.): Mahatma Gandhi-His Own Story, p.225.
\textsuperscript{40} Stanley Jones, Mahatma Gandhi, Lucknow: LPH, 1963, p.3
\textsuperscript{41} ibid., pp. 58, 66, 67
recognize Him as the Son of God… But I do believe that something of this spirit that Jesus exemplified in the highest measure, in the most profound human sense, does exist. An example of this flowering (of the spark of divinity in man) may be found in the figure and in the life of Jesus. I refuse to believe that there now exists or has ever existed a person that has not made use of this example to lessen his sin, even though he may have done so without realizing it. The lives of all have, in some greater or lesser degree, been charged by his presence, his actions, and the words spoken by his divine voice.

And because the life of Jesus has significance and transcendency, to which I have alluded, I believe that he belongs, not only to Christianity, but to entire world, to all races and people; it matters little under what flag, name, or doctrine they may work, profess a faith, or worship a god inherited from their ancestors.

**Sundry Reflections**

Gandhi brought into focus the fact that people of other faith has right to understand Jesus Christ within their own context and theological circle; they have the right to have faith in Him without being the part of the faith of historical church and institutionalized theological doctrines. It is much later that the theologian took note of this and tried to recognize the Christ incognito or Unknown Christ.

Gandhi has raised a vital question in regard to the presence of Christ among the people of faiths other than Christianity. He maintained that there is the presence and pervasiveness of Christ-like spirit among all the people of our world. He argued that people are saved by the Christ-like spirit no matter where they live and under whatever different names they worship God.

Gandhi's vision of the fundamental structure of reality- *satya* and *ahimsa*, is both intriguing and fascinating. *Ahimsa* as the nature of reality is similar to the vision of the suffering love, which is supremely manifested in the incarnation of God in Jesus. The cross of Christ as the fundamental fact and symbol, reflecting the nature of God in the Christian vision, is quite similar to Gandhi's idea of *ahimsa* as the nature of *satya* or reality.

One can also see that in the vision of reality as *satya*, Gandhi does not indicate any movement of *satya* towards the world of change; movement is ascribed to *ahimsa* only. *Satya* is detached from the world; *ahimsa* is related to the movement of dynamism of the world of experience. Man needs to be changed into *satya* through the process of passing through various stages of *satya*, or relative truths, moving toward the attainment of *satya* by the power of *ahimsa*. For this reason, Jesus remains a *satyagrahi* and not the *satya* itself.

The Gandhian vision of reality points to the ontological relatedness of *satya* and *ahimsa* as the basic structure of reality, because they are the converse and obverse sides of the same reality. But in the existential situation this structure gets disintegrated and *satya* is separated from *ahimsa*. The Christian vision of reality continues to assert that the basic ontological structure of reality is manifested in Jesus Christ.
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CHRISTOLOGY OF RAJA RAMMOHAN ROY

It is always a matter of great honour to be asked to felicitate a scholar at attaining a mile’s stone in life; in honoring him, we honour ourselves. Fr. Aleaz is such scholar that one may feel so. I am sure, if my father was alive, he would have blessed him at this juncture in life and would definitely have contributed an article. The onus has fallen upon me to offer my personal tribute to him as a scholar, teacher and exponent of advaitic interpretation of Christ-experience. In doing so, I am reflecting upon Christology of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, a contemporary of Serampore Trio, and a frequent visitor to Serampore, a place of residence of his maternal uncle. This rudimentary article is in the process of my working towards a Christology of the reformers of the great Indian renaissance.

Raja Rammohan Roy (1772-1833) is considered to be the Father of Modern Religious Movements in India as well as a prophet of Indian nationalism and the pioneer of liberal reforms in Hindu religion and society. A liberal to the core, he initiated relentless fight against the practice of Sati and child infanticide, supported English and modern education, advocated education for women and founded Brahma Samaj to reform Hindu social and religious structures from within. He served as revenue officer in the East India Company and retired in 1814 to devote full time in his passion to reform his religion and society. In 1833, he was conferred the title of Raja by the titular Moghul Emperor and was appointed his envoy to England. He died soon after his arrival at Bristol in 1833.

He was a keen student of religions and sought to satisfy his thirst for truth in taking other religions seriously. At the young age of fifteen, he wandered off to different places within the country and went as far as Tibet. He studied Islam, along with learning Arabic and Persian languages, which had a great influence upon his life and works. His insistence upon the unity of God and the meaninglessness of idol worship can be traced to his studies of this great religious tradition of the Asian continent.

Dr. Robin Boyd who is the first serious scholar making us aware of Indian Christian Theology, considers Raja Ram Mohan Roy to be the first Indian to have written seriously and extensively on Christian theological themes. Roy himself confessed and wrote: ‘The consequence of long and interrupted researches into religious truth has been that I have found the doctrines of Christ more conducive to moral principles and more adapted for the use of rational beings than any other which have come to my knowledge’. Like many other reformers of the nineteenth century, he was attracted towards the simple teachings of Christ as found in the Gospels, and not to the Christian doctrines and dogmas.

Understanding Ram Mohan Roy

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43 J.N.Farquhar, Modern Religious movements in India, p. 32
We may do great injustice to the Father of Modern India, if we judge him from the standpoint of our 'theological circle' without understanding his own. He developed his own religious and theological circle out of his experience and studies of great religious traditions of his time in India, Hinduism and Islam, and tried to understand the new entrant, Christianity, as well. He was a learned and enlightened Bengali Brahmin, deeply rooted in his own tradition with a crusading spirit to reform his society in the light of the modern knowledge that was dawn upon it through the introduction of new education by the then emerging rulers from England. The 'other religious traditions' provided him a common theological ground in the form of 'unitary principle', which he zealously held and protected from the attacks of his adversaries from within and without.

Dr. M.M. Thomas\textsuperscript{44} had noted three fundamental ideas in his theological thinking: first, a monistic faith in the unity of God inspired fundamentally perhaps by Islam, (and may I add, by Vedic and Upanishadic vision); Secondly, the conviction that morality is the essence of true religion; and thirdly, rationalism demands that religion should hold only to beliefs which are reasonable, and that reason should serve to purify religion of superstition and unnecessary mysteries and miracles. He adhered to these ideas when he formed the 'Brahmo Samaj' and applied them to his religion as well.

In his introduction to the translation of Ishopanishad, his critical, analytical and rational mind is quite evident: 'I have never ceased to contemplate with the strongest feelings of regret the obstinate adherence of my countrymen to their fatal system of idolatry, inducing for the sake of propitiating their supposed Deities, the violation of every humane and social feeling, and to view in (this system) the moral debasement of a race… I pray that (Hindus may come to) a conviction of the rationality believing and adoring the Supreme only; together with a complete perception and practice of that grand and comprehensive moral principle: Do unto others as ye would be done by.'\textsuperscript{45}

The sources of his theology and ethics were primarily derived from his own Religion and religious scriptures; he only wished to supplement them from other religions. He was a reformer with the concern for reforming Hindu religion and society from within, hence 'the appeal of Jesus Christ to him was primarily to his protestant Hindu soul'\textsuperscript{46}. He was neither a Christian nor pretended to be a Christian theologian like Joshua Marshman of Serampore. Hence he was rather surprised by the attack and was forced to engage into a controversy of not his liking.\textsuperscript{47} He can be classed as an ethicist or moralist, interested in the moral conduct of his society. He held the doctrine of Sufficiency of Law to justify, and sanctify, men as a criterion for his selection of Precepts of Jesus, and therefore left the historical and doctrinal passages of the Gospels. He

\textsuperscript{44} M.M.Thomas, The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance, Madras: C.L.S, 1977, p.3
\textsuperscript{45} quoted from MMThomas, ibid. p.3-4
\textsuperscript{46} ibid, p.8
\textsuperscript{47} Three appeals consumed about 330 pages.
himself was not so sceptical about the miracle stories but found no spiritual and theological significance in them except as mythologies helpful to preserve the precepts of Jesus.\(^{48}\)

His concern was for a religion, which answers the moral and spiritual problems of human than the incomprehensible theology and metaphysics. Hence he was a hesitant entrant into the controversy, which was forced upon him by one of the Serampore trio, Joshua Marshman: ‘I regret only that the followers of Jesus, in general, should have paid much greater attention to enquiries after his nature than to the observance of his commandments, when we are well aware that no human acquirements can ever discover the nature even of the most common and visible things and moreover that such enquiries are not enjoined by the divine revelation.’\(^{49}\)

**Two Pillars of Human Life**

With his personal studies of major religions and involvement in the social and religious turmoil of his time, he came to the conclusion that the foundation of a noble human life rests on two pillars: love of God and love of one's fellow humankind. He found his religion not lacking in the first but devoid of the other. He found the second abounding in the teachings of Christ and acknowledged, as noted above, that fact.

The denominational Christianity, historical and dogmatic questions, he found, were the stumbling block in seeing the simplicity and beauty of the teachings of Christ, and he side tracked them to glean that beauty for the benefit of the true seekers. He selected some of the moral teachings of Christ from the New Testament and published them as a separate booklet entitled, ‘The Precepts of Jesus, the Guide to Peace and Happiness’. With the publication of these precepts, and the heat it generated thereafter, the concept of seva, service, slowly gain acceptance in the Karma-dominated Indian society and the service to fellow humans almost became the creed of the reformers after Roy.

**The person of Christ**

The personhood of Jesus Christ, as well as his teachings, as found in the Gospels often finds appreciation and acceptance to any reader; it is the theology that repulses the serious adherent of other faiths. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was not an exception. His attitude to Christ is one of reverence as due to a great teacher and messenger of God, but he could not accept the title 'Son of God' if it implies an attribute to divinity. He quotes many scriptural passages to prove the 'natural inferiority of the Son to the Father' and holds that Jesus is merely delegated with power from God; he did not possess this power intrinsically. The unity with Father implied in certain Johannine texts is merely ‘a subsisting concord of will and design, such as existing among his apostles and not identity of being’. He, indeed, accepts the title 'Son of God' and other scriptural titles of Christ, but always in a qualified sense, implying that each one is special gift conferred by God, rather than his by right. Jesus, to him is 'the son of God, a term synonymous with that of

\(^{48}\) M.M. Thomas op. cit. p.9

\(^{49}\) collect., op. cit., p. 41
messiah, the highest of all the prophets; and his life declares him to have been, as represented in
the scriptures, pure as light, innocent as a lamb, necessary for eternal life as bread for temporal
one, and great as the angels of God, or rather greater than they'.
It is not difficult for Roy to accept the doctrine of the Virgin birth, but he would not like the idea
to associate it with the personality of the Holy Spirit. He will not deny the miracles of Jesus,
including resurrection. Both these points are unimportant for the religious minds of the Indian
people.
It may be helpful if we take a closer look at Jesus as understood by Raja Ram Mohan Roy:

i. The dependent Son
Roy seriously read the Gospels and derived his Christology on the basis of his own readings and
the reasons that satisfied his mind: 'Have we not his own express and often repeated avowal that
all the powers he manifested were committed to him as the son by the father of the Universe?
And does not reason force us to infer that a being who owes to another all his power and
authority, however extensive and high, should be in reality considered inferior to that other?
Surely therefore, those who believe God to be supreme, possessing the perfection of all
attributes, independently of all other beings, must necessarily deny the identity of Christ with
God'.

And he takes the passages from the Gospel of St. John to substantiate his views. He quotes I
Corinthians 15: 24-28 to indicate the dependency of the son to the Father. Jesus is the Messiah-
yes; he is anointed Son of God- yes, he is God himself-NO.

ii. Unity of Will, not identity of Being
There is no problem for Roy to accept the unity of God and Jesus, but he interprets this unity as
the unity of will and design, and not an identity of being. Applying the hermeneutical principle
of interpreting scriptures from the internal evidence, he reads 'I and my father are one' (John
10:30) in the light of 'that they may be one as we are one' (John 17:20-23), and concludes the
unity of God and Jesus is of the same character as Jesus and his disciples and offers three
choices:

'First as conveying the doctrine that the Supreme Being, the Son and the Apostles were to be
absorbed mutually as drops of water into one whole; which is comfortable to the doctrine of that
sect of Hindu metaphysics who maintain that in the end the human soul is absorbed into the God-
head, but is quite inconsistent with the faith of all denominations of Christians.
Secondly, as proving an identity of nature, with distinction of person, between the Father, the
Son and the Apostles, a doctrine equally inconsistent with the belief of every Christian, as
multiplying the number of persons of the Godhead far beyond what has ever been proposed by
any sect.

50 quted from MMThomas, op. cit., pg. 19
Thirdly, as expressing that unity which is said to exist wherever there are found perfect concord, harmony, love and obedience such as the Son evinced towards the Father, and taught the disciples in display towards the Divine will. That the language of the Saviour can be understood in this last sense solely, will I trust, be readily be acknowledged by every candid expounder of the sacred writing, as being the only one alike warranted by the common use of words, and capable of apprehension by human understanding.  

iii. First Born of Creation

Roy, however, has no difficulty in accepting the pre-existence of Jesus with God and being the first born of creatures, and supreme above all creatures including the angels: The Scriptures indeed in several places declare that the Son was superior even to the angels in heaven living from the beginning of the world to eternity, and that the Father created all things by him and for him. At the same time, I must, in conformity to those very authorities, believe him as produced by the Supreme Deity among created Beings (John 5:26; Col.1:5).  

He will go as far as to accept Jesus as Messiah, in the sense of the supreme messenger of God, a creature but not Creator as he says: He like Adam lived with God before his coming into his world... and afterwards was sent to the world in the body of Jesus, for effecting human salvation..... this does not preclude us from rejecting the idea of a two-fold nature of god and man.  

One can see here the traces of Pauline doctrine of 'unfallen Adam' incarnate to save the humankind. He is not willing to accept eternal generation, coexistence with the father. He has no difficulty in admitting that the Son of god is god in the same way as the son of man is a man, if it does not coupled with the assertion of the coeval existence of the son.

The Work of Christ

Christ accomplished his saving act through his teaching and his death was simply the supreme illustration of those precepts whose communication was the sole object of his mission. Roy rejected the ideas of vicarious suffering and sacrificial death; God is impassable and is untouched by the misery and suffering, and if Jesus suffered in his divine nature this would be highly inconsistent with the nature of God. Death of God is the dogma, which cannot be accepted by Roy. Vicarious suffering of an innocent for the guilt of others, too does not find favour in his sight; it is inconsistent with the justice of God. He has no hesitation to accept the suffering of the innocent Jesus as a lamb, taking it just a 'symbol of innocent subjected to persecution', but he did not find scriptural support for the attempt 'to represent human blood, or that of God in human form, as an indispensable atonement for sin'.

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52 English works, pp. 583f  
53 Ibid p.815
The plan of salvation for Roy is very simple: 'this do and thou shalt live' said Jesus, and following his precepts is the 'best and only means of obtaining the forgiveness of our sins, the favour of God, and strength to overcome our passions and to keep his commandments'. If we repent, we receive forgiveness and there is no need for an atoning death, though we are greatly helped by the supreme example of the Cross. If we fail to follow Jesus' teachings, the solution, for Roy, lies in repentance, which is the most acceptable atonement on our part to the All-merciful, when we have fallen short of that duty. This is the nearest, as Boyd notes, that Roy approaches to a doctrine of repentance, faith, grace and forgiveness.54

The God-head

Jesus Christ has not been a problem for many religiously minded people in this continent, but he is with the intellectuals and theologians. Where to place him within their own 'theological and religious circle' is the serious quest of the religious intellectuals influenced by Jesus Christ and his teachings. Raja Ram Mohan Roy devoted much of his time to a polemic against Hindu polytheism and idolatry, and he was aware that inclusion of Christ, as well as Holy Spirit, in Godhead, would be a reversion, amounting to yielding to something primitive and polytheistic. He would stick to the unitary principle in holding God as the sole object of worship and adoration that he expressed it so succinctly in the trust deed of the Samaj's place of worship, as noted by Farquhar, that the building must be used: "for the worship and adoration of the Eternal Unsearchable and Immutable Being who is the Author and Preserver of the universe but not under or by any other name, designation or title particularly used for and applied to any particular being or Beings by any man or set of men whatever"55.

From such a 'theological circle' drawn around him, Jesus cannot be placed within Godhead, so also the Holy Spirit as a Person within the Trinitarian formulation. Even then Roy's appreciation for Jesus did not diminish; he regarded Jesus as Son of God or Mediator, in a certain limited sense though, the messenger who communicates the will of God.

An Evaluation

One can agree with Keshub Chunder Sen that Roy's secular approach to religion made him incapable of appreciating mystic spirituality and bhakti cults in any religion. His deistic-Unitarian faith considered the idea of divine incarnation in any religion as a compromise of monotheism and as an inevitable source of personal and social demoralization. The later Brahmòs, like Sen and Parekh, tried to correct the course.

This brings to another point to ponder, as M. M. Thomas queries: 'does it mean that a modern man imbued with rational ethical secular temper like that of Ram Mohan Roy, cannot apprehend

54Boyd, op cit., p. 24
55 Farquhar, op. cit., p. 35
the truth and meaning of Jesus Christ unless they revert a religious-mystical experience or vision of reality\textsuperscript{56}

His 'theological circle' drawn by his philosophical categories of natural theology of monotheism and rational deism did not allow him to move beyond this circle, as that will mean the complete break down of that circle. If he would have come out of it and seen the source of morality of God in Love, this would have opened a way for him to perceive the centrality of cross of Jesus Christ, as symbol of God's self revelation to humankind.

His methodology of studying religious traditions is worth noting; he studied Hebrew and Greek to read and understand Christian precepts without any intervention of subjective Christian theological or doctrinal bias. He did the same in search of Islamic tradition, learning Arabic and Persian for the understanding Holy Quran and Sufi thoughts. He helped in the translation of Bible and had the linguistic competence in understanding the import of biblical teachings. He may have his own bias, but his intension and sincerity needs to be appreciated. He was perhaps the first Hindu scholar who studied Christian Scriptures in original languages and presented his own personal reflections.

His missionary zeal was directed for the moral and spiritual reform of the society in general, but Hindu in particular. His efforts were towards the moral and ethical regeneration of human kind, and he was willing to learn, use and absorb anything that is common in the religious traditions of his time for attaining his goal. It was unfortunate that he was misunderstood by the missionary zealots of his time, and they attacked him and his person, branding him an ‘atheist’ and ‘idolater’. In their missionary zeal for the establishment of Christendom with the nomenclature ‘Christians’, some of the missionary failed to recognize the sincere, perhaps secret, seekers, sympathizers, followers and disciples of Christ. Most of their attack was on doctrinal and denominational lines in which these new admirers of Christ were not interest; their interest was only in the “raw fact of Christ”. This continued trend has alienated many true followers of Christ and the Indian church has shut its door for many of them. A food for thought for many of us as we conclude this brief study.

\textsuperscript{56} op. cit., p. 32
In the recent past, the Western Church and missionary organizations had taken keen interest in India, especially on the subjects that deal with the challenges of religious plurality/pluralism for Christian faith and Church in the context of Hinduism. In our enthusiasm, we often tend to overlook the fact that other great religious traditions too are in the same boat, experiencing and facing the same challenges as we do. I, being a long time student of religious traditions, am, therefore, taking liberty to highlight the challenges faced by a majority religious community, Hinduism, in a situation of plurality of religions. It feels threatened and in turn, poses the same to the very existence of the followers of other religions, a process we are now experiencing in India. It may be a classic case of ‘majoritism’ and inferiority complex of a so called ancient and superior civilization.

A word of caution may not be out of place. It will be an exaggeration if we tend to understand, and conclude, that whole of Hindu society has been challenged with this phenomenon of religious pluralism, and is reacting the way discussed here. Most of the Hindus, by nature, are pluralistic, tolerant and accommodative. They are dismayed and disturbed, but are confused too. This silent majority takes it own time to react, though the minority among it reacts very fast along the way discussed here. This over-reactive minority should not be taken to be the majority.

A study in religious phenomena requires unattached objectivity as well as participatory understanding. Any attempt to employ a purely objective methodology will be counter-productive, as it will not provide much of the clues that are required to understand the inner dynamics of a living and vibrant religious tradition. Participatory understanding does not mean that one has to be an adherent of a particular religious tradition; one just needs to have an empathetic, perceptive and appreciative mind to grasp the fears and anxieties of the other. My background in philosophical Hinduism and rich inheritance I received from my father, who came out of the Hindu religious-fold but did not abandon Indian spirituality and culture, bestows upon me an authenticity, and legitimacy, to present a Hindu perspective on a situation of religious pluralism. I have earnestly tried here to understand the trauma the faithful Hindus have gone through, ordeals they have encountered with and hostilities they have faced in an era of religiously plural world of not far a distant past in our history.

I am a student of religious traditions and religious phenomena, and not a missiologist, like Theo. As a Christian, and a minister of the Church, I cannot ignore the issues that affect my faith-commitment to my personal Savior, Jesus Christ. There is always a temptation to insert them into our intellectual expressions, which I am sure, you will not mind, but feel free to take them up for critical scrutiny.
Indian situation and context in global perspective

India is considered, obviously from Christian perspective, to be a non-Christian country. The fact that this country is known for its religiosity, spirituality and adherents of almost all major religions of the world, is often overlooked. One may often wonder at the reticent and resilient nature of the Indian culture that has not yet lost the sense of Divine in spite of the onslaught of consumerist values of the television culture. God-men, god-experienced persons and charismatic leaders and movements are abound and still most popular in all the religions, even among the educated and upper echelons of the society.

Yet India is facing a time of change and transition. The impact of technology, frequent political changes, population growth, unemployment, globalization of culture and economy are some factors that mark the change. They have forced the nation and its people to see the world, nature, people and religions from new perspectives that are provided by the process of globalization. Even the psyche of the people is changing.

India, from the perspective of religions, is predominantly a Hindu country; Christianity and other religions are in minority. This local context should not be overlooked in a study of challenges a majority religious community poses to minority religious communities. In the global context, Christianity may be the major religion of the world, having much political influence through its adherents living in majority of countries of the world. World of so-called Christian countries, you may agree, is also in the process of transformation and change as migration of people from different regions of the world with different cultures and religious affiliations is constantly taking place in their part of the world. This situation was aptly summarized by the planners of a consultation at Fuller Theological Seminary in America: “Among the important characteristics of the world today is the large-scale movement of peoples from their ancestral homelands to other parts of the world. Millions of people from Africa, Asia, and Latin America have migrated to Europe and North America over the past fifty years. These people bring with them their traditions, religious commitments, and cultural values. At the same time they seek citizenship and the rights and privileges that the modern democratic system of government offers. Thus, in less than two generations the West has undergone a rapid pluralization of culture and society. This pluralization has coincided with the erosion of the authority of religion in society and the marginalization of the Christian church in public life.” The situation is not different in Britain or continent Europe.

We, as Christians in India, are perhaps in the same situation as our counter-part in the West. The difference is that they are a majority in their situation, while we are a minority. It is in this context, we are called to discuss, deliberate and resolve to face the challenges in our contexts in Christ’s way, so that His kingdom may come, His will be done on earth.

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57 Census 2001is not yet available. As per 1991 census, Hindus 82.64%; Muslim 11.35%; Christians 2.43%; Sikhs 1.96%; Buddhists 0.71%; Jains 0.48%
58 One can mentioned a few like, Sai Baba, Mahesh Yogi, Krishnamurty, Rajneesh, Rams Krishna Mission, ISCON etc.
Religious plurality in India: A Historical perspective

India is proud of its history and civilization. It has a long, uninterrupted and continuous flow of religious and spiritual tradition. A brief recollection of its religious culture here may not be out of place and context.

The Adivasi (aboriginal, earliest occupants, indigenous or native) Indian culture (pre-historic) is the oldest religious culture. It is the culture of the indigenous people, often classed as Scheduled Castes/Tribes. There are, apart from these, a large number of populate who follow primal and primeval religions. The Dravidian religious culture (2k BCE) is believed to have flourished in western India before forced to move down towards south due to an entry of a new culture from the further west- the Aryan (1.5k BCE). The evolution of Hinduism as a league of religions thereafter is a fact of history that baffles many. Jainism, though pre-historic, made its presence felt from 6th century BCE onwards, through the teachings of great reformers, Swami Parshvanath (c872-772 BCE) and Mahavir Swami (c540-468 BCE). Then appeared Gautam Buddha (c623-544 BCE) with his Noble Middle Path, followed by Guru Nanak Dev (1469-1539 CE) and his Way to Disciple- Sikhism. There is a tendency in the resurgent Hinduism to include these religions of Indic origin into its larger umbrella to the utter dismay, and protest, of these religions.

It is difficult to say when Zoroastrianism came to India; its presence in the subcontinent may go back to the Aryan invasion itself. There are similarities between its scripture, Avesta, and Rig-Veda, which suggest common source of these great religions. It is during the period of trade-relationship between India and Persia, and later period of persecution by the Islamic zealots, the followers of Zoroaster took refuse in India. Their Persian association, and with it their separate identity as religious community, is recognized by the common term ‘Parsee’ as distinct from Hindus. A few Jewish communities too settled in western coast of India for the same reasons and accepted in the Hindu society, as they, like the Parsees, kept their separate identity as a religious community without causing any disturbance in the social and religious structures of the Hindus. Early Christian community, associated with their Syrian origin, too kept the same distance with the Hindu society and gained a separate status in the society in the southern state of Kerala.. This Christian community in Kerala needs to be differentiated form the later Christian communities in other part of India subcontinent that came into existence due to the evangelical expansion of western Christianity. The marked difference lies in their continuation with socio-cultural traits of great Indian tradition.

Islam was introduced to Indians by the traders and Sufi missionaries in its early formative years, but gained much of its adherents through political power over the years once the Muslim dynasties established their rule in India. Though Christianity became part of Indian religious tradition soon after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (52 CE), its rapid growth is

59 A bureaucratic, constitutional and legal term for one section of aboriginal people.
60 Scheduled Tribe is the technical term used.
generally associated with the expansion of western colonial rules from the seventeenth century onwards, represented by Portuguese, Dutch, Danes, French, and British. Conversion through ‘sword’ and noble persuasions by the missionaries of these faiths is considered to be the cause of their growth, and discontent with hostility, in the Indian subcontinent.

Complexities of pluralism in Indian situation need sympathetic understanding and consideration. Hinduism is a pluralistic religion by its own nature and had to cope up with tensions and problems of its own diversified religious cultures. Left to themselves, out of the protective and cementing umbrella of Hinduism, the constitutive parts of Hinduism- Vaishnavism, Shaivism, Shaktism, modern religion movements, sects and cults within it – they can not live in peace and harmony. It is due to this compulsion, Hinduism would prefer to admit Christianity and Islam in its scheme of uniformity-in-plurality, and principle of unity-in-diversity. The refusal of non-Indic religions to fall in line with this scheme is disturbing the equilibrium that is achieved by Hinduism after a long strife and struggle in history.

Theology of Religious pluralism: The Hindu perspective

Plurality is a condition or situation, depicting the presence of many, with preference of choices. Pluralism, on the other hand, is an ideology that accepts the independent and autonomous existence of many, as in the Indian case, independence and autonomous existence of many religions. In such a situation, autonomous religions adjust themselves within the spaces available in a society and form their own criteria for interaction and relationship with others. Here comes into play the theology of religion. It may help us to understand the present Indian Hindu psyche if we take a brief note of its theology of religious pluralism.

It is from the studies of Vedas and Vedic literature, along with Puranas (quasi-mythological, quasi-historical as well historical religious books) and great epics- Ramayana and Mahabharata, that we come to know about social and religious situations of pre-historic India. Vedas mention wars against a number of hostile tribes and principalities in which early ‘Aryan’ settlers were engaged under the leadership of Indra, their king, later deified. Their religious, social and territorial subjugation slowly settled down into an emergence of what is later known as the great Indian (Aryan) civilization, which can also be forked into Hinduism as a religion and Hindu cultural nationalism. Plurality and diversity is the distinctive characteristic of this great Indian civilization from time immemorial. Indian culture has never been uni-/mono-culture; it has always been engaged in producing a composite of cultures and sub-cultures, classical and non-classical traditions, high and folk cultures.

Religion, as we now understand, is a part, and may be an essential component, of culture. In the secular culture of modern era, religion does not enjoy that position; it is side-lined, removed or bracketed into a private/personal realm, with no consequence to the culture as a whole. This is not the case with religion in the Indian context. Religion is the part and parcel of Indian culture, irrespective of its identification with any particular religion- Indic or non-Indic. This diversity in religious culture is very striking and remarkable.
It is from this perspective we are supposed to understand Hinduism as a religion. It is not a religion but a league of all the Indic religions - their spiritualities, traditions and practices. Hinduism perhaps took a leaf out of Mahayana Buddhism and opened its arms to welcome, integrate, absorb, transform, and borrow every kind of religiosity that found acceptance to its adherents. In the process it became an umbrella for every possible permutation and combination for syncretism without, at the same time, annihilating any. Buddhism was absorbed into it by accepting Buddha as one of the incarnations of Vishnu, and turning their places of worship into Hindu temples. The ethical teachings of Jainism - Satya (Truth), Ahimsa (Non-violence), Brahmacharya (Self-control), Asteya (Non-stealing) and Aparigraha (Non-possession), incorporated into Hindu ethics and spirituality.

From the point of view of multiplicity of religious experience, spirituality, philosophy and theology, personal experience and expression of ultimate reality in abstract and anthropomorphic forms, the Vedic seers were soon to discover that ‘Ekam sat, vipra bahudha vadanti’ - ‘Truth/Reality is One, though the wise say many’. It is the earliest perception of plurality by the Indian seers. Non-dualist interpretation of the Reality by philosopher theologians, like Adi Shankaracharya in eighth century and Mahatma Gandhi, Radhakrishnan, Aurobindo, in the last century, presented all multiplicity as relative and un-real; and advocated transcendence of multiplicity into unity. It is this realization of existent reality in their context that slowly crystallized in the principle of ‘unity-in-diversity’ of Indian civilization that provided continuity, harmony and coexistence of people with different cultures, races, languages and creeds. To an Indian, this country owes a lot to Hindu culture, and Hinduism is considered to be the most tolerant spirituality in the world, recognizing the fact that God is One, though he manifests himself in many ways, under different forms, at different times.

The corollary of this idea is the principle of Sarva dharma sadbhava, goodwill towards all religions. The madness and experience of sectarian wars in the middle ages would not have come to an end in absence of this principle. This principle is the source of Indian secularism which the Hindu right is trying to project over and against ‘Nehruvian secularism’ which they termed as ‘pseudo secularism’. Pseudo-secularism, as the policy of the state, followed the appeasement of the minority religious community at the expense of the majority. The true policy, according to the Rightist, should, in principle, have preference to none. We are also reminded that the concept of secularism is a western concept focusing at the separation of state and religion in the context of Christendom. The debate over this issue is still alive in the academic and political forums, causing much anxiety among the minority religious communities.

**Challenges to Hinduism in the context of religious pluralism: The Hindu perspective**

In the line of discussion that preceded in the previous section, I wish to highlight only a few of the vital challenges and threats that the Hindu religion is confronting in contemporary India.

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61 Rig Veda I.164,46
These are the very challenges and threats that are being posed, in return, to other religious communities by a minuscule but influential Hindu community. Plurality of religions in the context of Hinduism has to be understood as the presence of Islam and Christianity. Prior to the introduction of Christianity and Islam, plurality of religions and their inter-relations were settled through the application of the principles enunciated earlier. Buddhism and Jainism were a threat to Hindu religion of the time for centuries, but were forced to accept this principle though the philosophical, religious and political leaders, such as Adi Shankaracharya, Ramanujacharya, and southern empires of Chola, Chera, Pandyan and Vijayanagara. This was not to be the case with Christianity and Islam. They are still considered to be a threat and challenge to Hinduism as a religious force, because they are non-Indic in origin, having extra-territorial allegiance, with scant respect for Indian culture and religious traditions, sheep-stealers, conversion-oriented religions and despot. To this, they add secularist, Communists, western-oriented populace and liberal Hindus. It is interesting to note that religions of Indic origins, Zoroastrianism, Syrian Christianity and Judaism are not considered to be a threat to Hindu religion; threats and challenges come only from Christianity (minus Syrians) and Islam, and they are, therefore, threatened and challenged. The challenge and threat of plurality, some may propose, can, at best, be met with a denial of plurality as such. This is one of the courses some Hindus in India would like to take.

The fact of plurality of religion, in which Hinduism is merely one among many, has been very uncomfortable to the propounders of neo-Hindu ideologues. Contemporary Hindu perspective is held by a Hindus minority which proposes a doctrine of Hindu Rashtra, Hindu Nation, that is comprised of, and for, Hindus only. Minorities have a few options in such a nation: they must either merge themselves in the national (‘Hindu’) race, or live at its mercy, or quit the country at the sweet will of the national race. This is Hindutva\textsuperscript{62} doctrine, proposed by Veer Savarkar\textsuperscript{63} and developed by M.S.Golwalkar\textsuperscript{64}. It is now taken up by religio-politico-cultural organizations, such as Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh (RSS), Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) Bajarang Dal (BD), Shiva Sena (SS), Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) to which many Indians, irrespective of religious affiliation, have now begun to subscribe and follow.

Assertion of Hindu identity is another. The decline of Hindu political power in the Middle Ages and the long experience of colonial period- first Muslim then Christian British, wiped out the trace of Hindu identity and nation-hood, if there was any, from the memory of Hindu mind. The ‘appeasement’ and ‘divide and rule’ policy of the British administrators, the incisive-ignoble-erroneous hate-literature of the religious zealots, conversion-oriented activities of missionaries, social-religious-political resurgence in Indian society, introduction of two-nation theory based on

\textsuperscript{62} Literally means Hindu-ness. It is an assertion of Hindu identity over against other religious, specially Christian and Muslim. It is also a political ideology which proposes India to be a Hindu nation, and Hinduism, a state religion. It is associated with the fundamentalist aspect of Hinduism.

\textsuperscript{63} V.D. Savarkar; \textit{Hindutva, Who is a Hindu}, Mumbai: Swatantraveer Savarkar rashtriya Smarak, 1999.

\textsuperscript{64} M.S. Gowalkar.; \textit{We or Our Nationhood Defined}, Nagpur: Bharat Publications, 1939
religious identity, partition and massacre of millions of people, rise of secular India, - are not all but a few factors that gave rise to a sense of Hindu identity,\textsuperscript{65} Hindutva, in present-day India. The doctrine of Hindu Nation and Hindu Identity does not seem to succeed in solving the problem of plurality as it does not find favour even among the followers of Indic religions. These do not wish to be in identity with either Hindu nation or Hindu religion. Buddhism and Sikhism have been protest and reforming movements, and have protested vehemently any proposal to take them into Hindu fold. Buddhists and Sikhs want personal laws of their own, and would not like to be governed by Hindu personal laws. There were violent protests when it was suggested to place Sikh scripture, \textit{Guru Grantha Saheb}, in Hindu temples and be worshipped. Buddhists too complain of desecration and taking over their places of worship by the Hindus in the middle ages. Some Jains have laid claim upon the site of Ayodhya as they consider it their place of worship. It is interesting to note that not a single Hindu temple is dedicated to Lord Buddha even though he is regarded as an incarnation of God Vishnu. Buddhism of Ambedkar is termed as Neo-Buddhism of Dalit\textsuperscript{66} origin and is looked down upon by the caste Hindus. It is an attempt towards a merger of nascent Buddhism with Hinduism, if there is any possibility, and placing its adherents to their old Hindu category under caste system. Dalits have accepted the term, but refuse to oblige the Hindus.

Hindu nation and identity is also a problematic and controversial issue. Sikhs had rejected it in the past and demanded a nation/state of their own. Tribals of the north-east are often charged of treason on this account, as they fight for their own identity. This notion is also not acceptable to southern states, especially Dravidian parties, who would resist any northern/bramhmanical hegemony. Dalits, as a group, are the new entrants into this rejection. Anything Hindu reminds them of exploitation, discrimination, deprivation, marginalization and dispossession; it stands for the force that has robbed them of their identity, humanity, and person-hood; it represents a yoke of slavery. Restitution of their identity and person-hood, dismantling of exploitative power structures and restoration of their rightful place is the agenda of the struggle of the Dalits.

Hindu religious and cultural Nationalism (Hindutva) is the answer to such a refusal from so-called members of larger Hindu-fold. It is an ideology that accepts India-born religious and cultural traditions, but demands an allegiance to Indian nation, religions and religious sentiments, gods and goddesses, myths, histories, heroes, social orders and pilgrim centers. Introduction of singing in adoration to Saraswati, a Vedic goddess of learning, in schools was a test case some time ago, which caused protest from Christian, Muslim, and ‘secularist’ state governments. Safronization of education and introduction of obscure subjects, such as Vedic Mathematics, Astrology, call for Indian Church, Common Personal Codes, etc are the manifestation of such a notion.

\textsuperscript{65} One of the popular slogan is “Say with pride that we are Hindus”. But note that it is collective Hindu identity that is emphasized, and not the personal/individual.

\textsuperscript{66} Dalit refers to the lowest among the caste structure of Hindu/Indian society. They constitute about 138.2 million people(17% of Indian population in 1991)
Fundamentalism is a way to encounter hostile religions and alien cultures. Hindu fundamentalism beckons Hindus to go back to their golden age of the past, found in the Scriptures and be a part of the utopian nation, Hindu Rashtra, based upon religious concept of a nation. It is also an endeavor to meet the challenges posed by Christianity and Islam, and modernity as well. Hindu fundamentalism is on rise ever-since Hindu rightist has obtained political power through election verdicts in state legislatives and national parliament. The way the destruction of a Muslim place of worship was handled by successive governments, coupled with election victories thereafter, is seen as an indication of popular support and approval of majority community, and a license for a host of fundamentalist agenda. Cow protection, Ayodhya-Kashi-Mathura project, Kashmiri pandit issue, anti-conversion laws, uniform civil code, abolition of minority rights, are more than enough to supply fire, in the years to come, to the political ambition of fundamentalists. These will surely unite Hindus under their umbrella and do what they will say, as they did it in Ayodhya, Mumbai and Gujarat.

Communalism and communal divide is the direct result of religious fundamentalism. It expresses itself in two forms- formation of localized homogenous religious communities, and, hatred and hostilities towards the other. It is now observed that Muslim and Christian households are specially being marked by the rightist state government and their homes and places of worship are targeted at the time of communal tensions. Sikhs too were targeted after the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984. The boundaries of many localities and villages have been re-drawn in several areas after recent riots in many parts of the country. There are charges of ethnic cleansing in many parts of our country. Majority communalism is fast growing in our society to the peril of minority religious communities.

Religious terrorism is a new phenomenon of fundamentalism in world religion; Hindu society is not an exception to it. It is perhaps a reflection of what is going on in our society. Sporadic violence, in the past, against other religious communities, especially Muslims, was an expression of communal divide in Indian society. But the sudden and well-planned explosion of violence against other minority communities, during the last few years, has exposed the terrorist tactic, and design, of Hindu fundamentalists. In this period, Churches were destroyed, huts of village-Christians were burnt, Christian institutions were attacked, nuns and priests were assaulted, and missionaries were murdered. Vandalism on Valentine day, disco clubs, dress code of Hindu women, physical attack on Dalits etc., are some of the terror tactics used by Hindu fundamentalist forces to curb the freedom within Hindu society. Distribution of three-forked spears, *Trishuls*, is another way to instil fear in minority communities. It is not surprising that some of the BJP ruled states have started identifying missionary organizations and missionaries, and taking a mini census, even though they are Indians. The memory of Gujarat riots and attacks

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68 It is one of the armaments of Shiva. As it is ceremoniously given, it is a call to take part in a religious war against the opposing forces.
on Christians not long ago, is still fresh and there is an apprehension in the minds of Christians that they will soon be systematically targeted by the fundamentalist groups. Conversion is becoming a debatable issue in India now. Theory and practice of conversion, though, is not limited to Christianity and Islam, they are the only ones charged for an offence if it takes place anywhere in India. It is a myth that Hinduism is not a missionary religion. It came into existence due to persistent, even violent, efforts of Hindu missionaries all though ages and continues to be so because of numerous missionaries of the faith—\textit{alwars} (poet-saints), \textit{bhakti} (devotee) poets, \textit{sadhus} (medicanta), \textit{sants} (Holy-men), \textit{gurus} (teachers), \textit{acharyas} (scholars) \textit{bhagwans} (god-men), \textit{swamis} (lords), mahants (rectors), and god-men/women. In the modern era, the reform movements, such as Brahm Samaj, Theosophical Society, Ramakrishna Mission, International society of Krishna Consciousness (ISKON) and numerous gurus, used merging option for preventing Hindus to move out of its fold, and, at the same time, attracting followers from other religions and nationalities into it. In an era of Globalization, and in light of the opportunities it provides, Hinduism, with all shades and colours, is in the global market. We are witnessing a new phase of Hinduism; internationalization of Hinduism is taking place.

Hindus, however, are afraid that Muslims and Christians will soon swallow most of their fellow believers through this method, especially converting Dalits and Tribals who are numerically very large. This fear is being met by the Hindu rightist at religious as well as legislative levels. At religious level, they find it prudent, and pragmatic, to pursue the same course as that of their distracters—conversion for conversion. The followers of Hindutva ideology have an answer to this situation in the form of conversion, (they hate to use this word in their context, and reserve it for Christian and Islamic context) termed as ‘Shuddhi’\textsuperscript{70}, ‘home coming’ and ‘returning’. Another way is to prevent conversion from within. For this, merging option is covertly made available to the religions of Indic origin by offering special privileges to the Dalits if they remain within the fold of Indic religions, while withdrawing the same to others. There is a fear in the minds of Hindu policy makers that a way of throwing away the stigma of caste will be available to Dalits once the same privilege is extended to Christian and Muslim Dalits. A passing reference can be made to the Tribals in India who also enjoy special privileges under the same Government policy of reservation, but cannot be prevented to follow the religions of their choice.

Missionary movements and missionary religions are an anathema to Hindu psyche. It was the Buddhist monks and missionaries who almost wiped out Hinduism of that era, and they do not wish to face the same fate once again. It feels itself threatened by missionary religions like Christianity and Islam. Like Buddhism, the message of Christianity and Islam touched the hearts of the Dalit and the down-trodden who were groping in the dark for the liberating power, which can offer them a new community founded upon justice, human dignity, freedom and \textit{oikoumene}.

\textsuperscript{69}CWM News (20.3.03) at http://www.cwmission.org.uk
\textsuperscript{70}It is a very old Vedic ritual, used as a purification rite for taking back the ostracize member of the society, obviously Aryan, later Hindu. It is used by Swami Dayananda Saraswati, the founder of Arya Samaj, to reconvert Christian and Muslims. The same is being used by the forces of Hindutva now for the same purpose.
They are counter-culture movements, posing a threat to the very existence of Hindu religion and culture. In many parts of India, Dalits and deprived masses are protesting against their social, economic and political exploitation, and threatening to convert themselves to other religions for the sake of a better social deal. This politics of conversion was first enacted in Meenakshipuram, Tamilnadu in 1981 when a number of Hindus decided to convert to Islam as a remedy for liberating themselves from upper-caste exploitation. This still continues, in some parts of India, a political weapon and is an additional rationale for introduction of a bill in Tamilnadu. Conversions can be restricted, and totally proscribed by legislation in a more democratic way. I am living in a state which recently passed an act against conversion. There are three other states who have done so two decades ago and have it defended its legality in the Supreme Court of India. Now many other states, controlled by BJP, are planning to enact anti-conversion laws; and there is a suggestion to introduce the same in the Parliament too. Though the bill is called freedom of religion bill, its freedom is granted only to Hindus and Indic religions, and restricted to others. Christianity and Islam are obviously targeted for any act of conversion.

Christiansity and Religious plurality

Plurality is a gift of God to humankind, as it is explicitly revealed in His gracious act of creation (Gen. 1), including the gender-differentiated creation of human kind (Gen.1:27-30; 2:4-24). It is worthwhile to take note of the fact that God beheld His creation, expressed in plurality of forms and expressions, to be ‘very good’ (Gen.1:31). We are told by the scholars that the Hebrew ‘TÔB’ refers not only to something that is ethically and aesthetically good, but also pragmatically good. It may help us to appreciate the plurality and diversity in the world which we inhabit. Perhaps nothing speaks so clearly of this divine plan of pluralism as the recognition of the Trinitarian principle active in the Christian understanding of the personhood of God. Plurality is a God-given phenomenon to the creation. In developing any theology of pluralism in relation to religions in our glocal (Global + Local) context, we should not lose sight of Creation theology.

Facing the Challenges: Christian Mission in Indian context

It is the mono-cultural missiology that Church in India inherited from the preachers of the Gospel. Most of them came during the heyday of colonial power, and were easily identified with colonial culture, aimed at expansion and growth. One can discern a geographical understanding of mission; mission only meant ‘foreign mission’, going out to preach to the heathens. Other facets of missions enshrined in the Bible, such as liberation, humanization, incarnation,

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71 Now, after the defeat in parliamentary election-2004, the Government of Tamilnadu has withdrawn the bill.
sanctification, transformation, communion, *oikoumene*, reign of God etc., were, and are, often overlooked. Time, context and situation have changed in India, but the theology of mission of the church in India refuses to change. It requires a paradigm shift in understanding of mission and missiology in religiously plural world.

The ground reality in India, you may agree, is pluralistic. This calls for a diversity of approaches and goals in theory and practice of Christian mission. Just because most of the Indians have not heard about Jesus Christ does not mean a uniform proclamation of the Gospel aimed at planting the churches. Mission to Hindus is radically different in content and method than mission to Muslims. Same is the case with the other religious communities on the Indian soil. The most urgent need in the Indian context, as Fr. Jacob Kuvunkal rightly perceives, is for ‘…an existential presentation of Jesus Christ through the living discipleship of the community, rather than an arrogant verbal proclamation, insensitive to the feelings of the people.’74 This urgent need, however, does not rule out the need for direct and explicit proclamation in a situation where people are willing to listen to the word of God.

Christianity is a minority religion in India, over-shadowed by Islam and overwhelmed by Hinduism. It is culturally and socially closer to Hinduism than to Islam. These facts are the cause of most of the problems Christian community is facing today. The fact of minority is one that can be taken care of, but it is the minority complex that is traumatic for the community. The community has to overcome this complex and be a leaven, a light to the nation, and a liberating community.

**Misiological Implications**

a. Cultural transformation is an important expression of the mission in India. There are many cultural traits that are sustained in Indian social structures on the strength of their sanctions in Hindu scriptures and law codes. Caste is one among them. There is no basis of caste in the message of Christ; its foundation and sustenance is found only in Indian culture and Hindu religion. Its continuance in the Indian church, therefore, is shocking and startling. Christianity, sadly enough, continues to perpetuate this stigma in its community even now, so much so that a majority of Christians now prefer prefix ‘Dalit’ before their Christian identity. Dalit Christians are now demanding the same status as that of their Dalit bothers/sisters in Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism, so that they will be entitled to receive benefit from the reservation policy of the government. Unless and until Dalits in the church are not fully accepted, their human-hood is not fully restored, and are not given their due place in the ministry of the Church and the society, the mission of Christ for transformation of culture and society will remain incomplete; so also his prayer, ‘…that they may be one’75. One of the priorities in the mission in India, therefore, is the abolition of the culture of caste in the Christian society with its power to stigmatize, exploit

75 Jn. 17:11
Transformation of society needs to be taken seriously as the mission of Church in Indian context, and the number games has to take the back seat. This is nothing but going back to the fundamentals of goal that is associated with mission, and this is what we have to offer to the people in a religiously plural world: New Creation in Christ, Membership into the Kingdom of God, Call to become a Child of God, New Community, Rebirth, New Earth. This calls for a critical evaluation of our age-old, out-dated and dehumanizing customs, traditions, sacred codes and religious laws. We may, then, have to initiate new customs, traditions and social laws which are suitable to our generation, based upon the egalitarian principles of equality, justice and self-identity.

b. Caste, as it is noted earlier, is a stigma to the otherwise hallowed Indian civilization and culture. It is all-pervasive and is present in every Indian community irrespective of its religious affiliation. A social system, based upon an inequality created for the perpetuation of privileges for minority sections of the society at the expense of the majority and forcing them to live a life, devoid of human dignity, equality, self-identity and self-respect, is a fact of Indian reality. In order to fulfill the mission of Christ, in our context, is to involve oneself, at whatever cost, for the liberation of those who are victims of such a system irrespective of caste, color and creed. At the recently concluded international consultation, the Churches in India accepted Dalit liberation as a new agenda for action. It called upon Churches to place Dalit issues in the context of mission of the church for Liberation.

c. Other areas of social transformation that requires our serious attention is women’s issues-dowry, infanticide of girl-child, child marriages, education and employment, equal wages, representations in democratic set-up etc., in our society. Church has to take steps to strengthen the ministry of women, their ordination, and their induction into its power-structures of the Church. Cultural inhibitions and hindrances needs to be over-come, and if need be, abandoned.

d. The mission of the Church in India is formation of new communities of disciples. It requires a thorough change in structures that perpetuate injustice in religious, political and economic spheres of human society. It means emergence of a community, founded upon the kingdom-values of Christ-like-love, service, integrity, forgiveness and reconciliation. In this mission of social and cultural transformation, in the context of multi-religious society such as ours, the Church must seek the support and cooperation of all people of good-will. It has to become a community of counter-culture, voice of the voiceless, and transform itself into an instrument, and expression, of Divine care and concern for all created beings. This will provide an opportunity to every member to develop him/herself to the optimum potentiality of God-given talents.
e. Poor-oriented mission is the burden of Jesus’ message (Mt. 11:4-5; Lk 7:22-23) which can not be abandoned in this era of globalization and market economy. India needs Christ not because the bulk of the Indian masses are non-Christians, but because they are poor. The Hindu theory of Karma makes people apathetic and fatalist to their own condition of poverty, and others to overlook their condition of poverty and helplessness with stoic silence and blindness. Poor-oriented mission has the perspective of the victims, the sinned against, the poor, the exploited and the oppressed. They are found every where, in every religion, in every society. Solidarity and participation with them in their search for justice and dignity is an important expression of the mission in India.

f. Conversion is a contentious issue in the contemporary India. We need to understand the difficulty, and objections, others have with our understanding of Christ-given obligatory commandment. It is alleged that the religious conversion into Christianity is taking place through force. The Tamilnadu Act expresses this sentiment as it entitled the bill as Prohibition of Forcible Conversion of Religion. It assumes that conversion is being brought about through allurement in the form of gift or gratification in cash or kind, and grant of material benefit; by force which includes a show of force, a threat of injury of divine displeasure or social excommunication; through fraudulent means which includes misrepresentation or any other contrivance. Provisions for punishment are harsh if the converts are women, children and Dalits. Onus is upon us to satisfy the law and answer to the questions therein. We have to reformulate our understanding of conversion in the light of Biblical understanding that is relevant in our context. My personal preference is for Metnoia, though others may have their own. Indian theologians do consider it a process which leads to liberation, humanization, sanctification, transformation, communion with Christ. It has reference to an individual as well as to culture and society. Traditional understanding with emphasis on baptism and taking the membership of the Church has to be revaluated, in the light of different meaning of the commission of Christ and the laws of the land.

It is unfortunate that conversion in India often understood in its narrower and western socio-religio-cultural sense, the change of religion. It is due to this misunderstanding that most of the objections against conversion are voiced that often leads to charged emotive outburst in the

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76 Felix Wilfred, *From the Dusty Soil*, Madras: University of Madrsa, 1995, p.163
77 In its explanatory note, the Tamilnadu ordnance says: Reports have been received by the Government that conversions from one religion to another are made by use of force or allurement or by fraudulent means. Bringing in a legislation to prohibit such conversions will act as a deterrent against the anti-social and vested interest groups exploiting the innocent people belonging to depressed classes. It may also be useful to nip in the bud the attempts by certain religious fundamentalists and subversive forces to create communal tension under the garb of religious conversion. The Government have, therefore, decided to enact a law to prevent conversion by use of force or allurement or by fraudulent means.
traditional Hindu families and society. ‘Reigio’ which is a very personal and phenomenal term and concept, is translated, and equated, with an ontological term in Sanskrit, Dharma, in the Indian context; and this has led to many a misconception attached to the term, ‘conversion’. Our theology should clarify that the Christian conversion is not a change of religion (Dhrama Parivartana), but it is ‘metanoia’, change of heart, change of old life-style, and establishing oneself in the Ground of Being. This ‘metanoia’ takes place in response to the call of Christ Jesus, hence we prefer be known as ‘Christians’

g. Legal and constitutional way is not always the best way available, and applied, in a religious plural context as they are often open to change and interpretation. We often quote Articles 14 (Equality before Law), 15 (Prohibition of discrimination) and 25-1 (Freedom of conscience, free profession, practice and propagation of religion) in support of our rights in secular democratic India. We are reminded by the Supreme Court that right to propagation does not presuppose the right to convert.78 As good citizens, we need to respect the laws of the country while fulfilling our obligation as witnessing followers of Christ, engaged in the transformation of human society.

h. We have yet to learn a responsible way of communicating the Gospel of Christ in a religiously plural world. Minding our language, and using it in a responsible way, is something we have to learn. It is often complained that we Christians still use derogative and abusive language with reference to the people of other faiths, gods, places of worship, heroes, leaders and theologies. Hate literature and aggressive proclamation cannot win us friends and souls for Christ; this can only be done with humility, service and self-giving. It is not becoming of follower of Christ to call his/her neighbour, heathen, ignorant, idol-worshipper, tyrant, devil, fascist etc., whatever may be the compulsion.

i. Dialogue is the best way of approaching neighbours and forming relationships through mutual respect and acceptance. It opens up a way of understanding and mutual education. I do not wish to pass judgment upon the many faithful preachers of the Gospel who left their countries for the concern of us in India, but I may say that many did not try to understand the psyche of Hindus. The same may be said of now of the national missionaries. We are not outsiders, but we fail to understand and acknowledge the humiliation and hurt our Hindu brothers and sisters have gone through for a thousand year. There is a tendency among the fundamentalist forces to open the wounds of the past and highlight the injustices, raise the emotive issues and call for violent reaction. People often forget that historical injustices and injuries do not have one direction; every nation and community had inflicted them on others and had in turn suffered the same. V. S. Naipaul is not far from truth in describing Indian civilization

78 AIR 1977-SC-908 ‘We find no justification for the view that Article 25 granted a fundamental right to convert any person to one’s own religion.’
as wounded civilization. A situation in dialogue gives us an opportunity to express our sympathy and understanding our hurt, humiliation and angst, as well as a way for catharsis. It provides us an opportunity to share our experience of liberation-in-Christ with our bother/sisters of different spirituality.

j. Religiously plural world tends to introduce a distinct class of people who can be termed as ‘proselytes’, ‘sympathizers’, ‘un/non-baptized Christians’, ‘non-baptized believers’, ‘anonymous Christians’, ‘Hindu/Muslim/--- Christians’⁷⁹, ‘Jesu bhakta’ (devotees of Jesus) etc.; they are, I am told, fast growing in India. Herbert Hoefer prefers to class them together as ‘Churchless Christianity’⁸⁰. With the Christianization of Indian religions and culture, some of the Christian and Christ’s values are being absorbed into them, thus offering their followers an alternative within their own spirituality. Social, family and other compulsions too keep them away from the Church and becoming a part of Christian community. Church in India is called upon to provide support and encouragement to this new community-in-making.

The love of God is universal and is available to every individual, irrespective of his/her nationality and culture. The way to make this universal love of God which communicates to the people of different religions and cultures cannot be uniform and homogenous; but plural in form and content. We are called upon to work out a new theology and methodology for mission in a religiously plural world.

⁷⁹ I was pleasantly surprised when Dr. John Hick used the phrase ‘Hindu Christian’ in reference o my father.
⁸⁰ Herbert E. Hoefer, *Churchless Christianity*, Madras: Gurukul Lutheran Theological College & Research Institute, 1991
Much has changed since December 6, 1992. A new phase has appeared on the horizon of Inter-faith Dialogue which, of late, has assumed a more cosy and relaxed course in intellectual exercise. The process of structured dialogue, a situation that was the hallmark of the ecumenically sponsored theology of dialogue in India, almost came to a jolting halt. Doubt about its utility and purpose was raised. The adjustment process, with some accommodative postures, was not yet complete when new phase suddenly erupted. A massive, violent reaction followed from the minority community, belonging not to the periphery of Ayodhya but distant places in Maharashtra, Kerala and Tamilnadu. It took a considerable toll of human life and property. The distrust of one minority community toward others penetrated deep into people’s conscious and sub-conscious psyche, as different tones and languages started to appear from rival religious and political leaders of our great motherland.

The event need not be considered in isolation. The long history of our people reflects the relationships of people in different camps, wearing different caps. The trauma of the partition-experience remains fresh in the collective mind of people and families of the subcontinent. In the fiftieth year of independence as a nation, the trauma revisited many homes and families. A desire to rekindle the experience, a reaction as-it-should-have-been, emerged with strengthened vigour, in new forms and expressions. It was a time, especially for three nations of the subcontinent, to traverse the memory lane of events that gave birth to their initial experience of nationhood.

The last few years have been marked with a manifestation of resurgent movements in almost all major religions in India. This, on the one hand, is a welcome sign. On the other, it has been a matter of great concern, since it has led to some violent expression of religiosity among adherents. We may take satisfaction in the fact that we do not have anti-blasphemy laws, as do our neighbours, and that bishops do not commit suicide in order to draw the world’s attention to the plight of Christians. Yet, we watch helplessly as our places of worship, or those of others, are razed or threatened to be razed to the ground. The fear of such action from the majority community cannot just be brushed aside any more.

The rise in social, cultural and political groups that profess religious affiliation, some with political clout and power, may not be a new phenomenon. Extension of their mass base and support surely is. Viswa Hindu Parishad (VHP), Bhajarang Dal and their families are no longer unknown entities or appendices to the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS). They have carved out their own area of influence in the Hindu society. Different jihad groups, liberation armies and liberation fronts among Islamic and Christian communities have also developed. They all threaten the very fabric of a secular and pluralistic society, leading it towards more chaotic and racially centred societies and communities.
The year 1998 has introduced yet another factor into our situation: the hung parliament and the rise to power of a government dominated by the *Hindutva* (Hindu-cultural-nationalistic) forces. The shouting of religious slogans in Parliament by members of a particular political party points to a new development. So also, the forsaking a major political commitment to construct a mandir (temple) and removing Article 370 (that provides special status to the State of Jammu & Kashmir). This gives credence to the theory of a hidden agenda within the new government. Minorities fear crippled inter-faith relations for the coming months and years, now more than ever, as different signals and pronouncements emanate from leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and groups associated with it. Power-in-governance provides power to manoeuvre societal relations. And the process has already been started by the most active groups of socio-cultural organisations associated with the BJP. Reported preparations for the construction of a temple at Ayodhya, scrapping the Minorities Commission, diluting the privileges of minority religious institutions and organisations, raising objectionable remarks about the use of wine in churches may not be just casual leaks. They may be intended to test the strength and reaction of minority and secular communities.

The smiling ‘Buddha’ at Pokhran in May 1998 was a great scientific feat with numerous political implications, assessment of which continues. Nobody thought of its religious implications, that it could be used to arouse religious sentiments for political purposes. The talk of constructing a temple at the nuclear test-site and scattering sand from there all over the country to demonstrate the power of a particular community may be an expression of some over-zealous activists. But the message is not lost. The rise of another power along the line of those possessing nuclear arsenals, with no hesitation by some to associate them with religions—Christian, Islamic, Jewish and communist—is a matter of great concern. The kind of mood that prevailed and the statements issued after the explosion of eleven nuclear devices in the subcontinent was nothing other than war hysteria with religious coloring.

In the Indian context, a paradigm shift has taken place in the process and understanding of dialogue. Opportunists are perplexed at this sudden change in situation; theoreticians busy themselves to explain new phenomena and to readjust their theories. In such a situation, those who are sincere in their approach and commitment to inter-faith relationships may need to come forth in order to build a society free from mutual distrust and a psychosis of fear. A new era in inter-faith dialogue needs to be initiated with vision to build a new community of humanity based upon the mutuality of trust and fraternity. The initiative to establish the Kingdom of God lies squarely upon the shoulders of individuals and communities that share a common heritage of God's revelation in their history and culture. Those who are more interested in constructing temples for God upon destroyed debris of common history and evolving cultural heritage hardly qualify.

Most failures in dialogue result directly from disregard for the *hoi-poloi* and basal grass-root communities. There was a time when individuals used to fight on behalf of religions and religious communities. An era of communal wars to ‘settle’ the issues was followed by a
pluralistic ecumenism of theology of religion. The latter was highly sophisticated, statement oriented and programme directed. Each has its own merits and demerits; each has its own validity, purpose and utility. The time has come to move on, however.

**The Proposals**
The present need is for community involvement in thinking, programming and action. Community necessarily means both the particular religious community and the inclusive, pluralistic community. There is no doubt that the Christian community of scholars and theologians has done pioneer work in initiating dialogue as a way to enhance inter-faith relationships and to build mutual trust and friendship. The same process has proven to be the best means to reduce tension and promote peace, harmony and understanding. Basic units of communities in general—individuals, families, group of families, units of social organisations and institutions—are also needed.

The social and communal strife and tension are hallmarks of every third-world community that is pluralistic, democratic (not necessarily in political terms), and developing. Underneath every claim of communal harmony in our society, one can hardly ignore areas of conflict, tension, anger and mutual mistrust. This situation demands transparency and sincerity that can lead to dialogue-in-confrontation. Communities no longer can avoid questions and suspicions such as motives, conversion and baptism, extra-territorial loyalties, foreign support and contribution, militancy, communalism, fundamentalism, secret agenda, personal laws, politics of religion, caste discrimination, women's issues, etc. Dialogue on such issues will not be free from tensions and emotional flare-ups, charges and counter-charges, threats and walkouts. One need not fear such situations within dialogue. Perseverance, sincerity, integrity and loving concern will ultimately succeed.

Social concerns and liberating motifs are no longer a monopoly of Christian missionary endeavours; others too have joined or carved out their own areas of influence. Inter-religious and inter-ideological groups are quite active in programmes for social upliftment, human dignity, justice issues, and liberation movements for women, Dalits and weaker sections of the society. Prudence and commitment demand that diversified labours and energies be channelled only through a united body, to be more effective and liberating. Ideology divides, whereas praxis unites. The need of the moment is for a dialogue-in-praxis, keeping in mind the following. Ramakrishna Mission has been active in areas of education, medicine and publication. RSS has been involved in programmes to build up cultural nationalism and social services. Siromani Akali Dal has highlighted the problems of Sikhs as a minority community. Bahuguna and Patekar have raised environmental issues. Swamy Agnivesh has led agitation to liberate bonded and child labourers. Dialogue-in-praxis may provide an opportunity to all involved for better understanding and co-operation. It may also facilitate other successful channels to help communities grow.
In pluralistic societies, communities—majority as well as minority—have much to share by way of confession and catharsis. They have not always been considerate or sympathetic to each other’s needs and feelings. They have not always been patient, tolerant, or willing to accommodate different views and ways of living. They have often been wrong rather than wronged in their application of universal principles of justice, human dignity and equality. An opportunity through dialogue-in-reconciliation may provide a healing touch to a society whose communities have become a ‘mental-wreck,’ ever ready to react violently to even the slightest provocation in order to express feelings of hurt and frustration.

Dalit communities in general, but Dalit individuals in particular, have been discriminated against, exploited and abused for centuries by caste-structured societies and communities in India. Such wrong needs not only to be corrected; the wronged must be restored to full human dignity and self-hood as the minority, dominant society repents and has a real change of heart. Such a meta-noia should be explicitly visible through the sprouting of new communities devoid of distinct, caste-related stigma.

Eastern religious-spiritual-traditions value silence (shanti). It is valued as the vital, potent force in communicating divine as well as human messages. Dialogue-in-silence characterises the ultimate in all processes that involve dialogue. In the fiftieth year of our independence as a nation, we remembered Mahatma Gandhi, the chief exponent of dialogue-in-silence. His actions involved withdrawal from spoken words; spending time in prayer, meditation and fasting; participation in inter-faith and corporate worships. His Silence never hindered dialogue; it continued through notes and activities. Inter-faith, community worship may provide a setting for dialogue that will create a genuine community of believers in the Ultimate Source of our being and help communities to transcend narrow dimensions of human institutions based on caste, colour and creed. In the stillness of mind and in the silence of words, the community and individuals will open themselves up to the possibilities of dialogue with the Ground of Being of all that exists. Hope remains—to realise unity, harmony and integrity in all of creation in and through the One in whom we move and have our being.

Concluding Remarks
No experience of dialogue is worthy if it is conducted, or engaged in, without sincerity and integrity of purpose. The Christian community or individual need not to have any hidden agenda when it/he/she enters into dialogue with people of other living faiths and ideologies. No community can be expected to compromise matters of Ultimate Concern and faith-commitment. Christo-centricity cannot be compromised with any theological or non-theological ideology, even Theo-centricity. There can be no Christianity without Christ, though there can be various forms of theism, theologies and religions with or without Christ. Our neighbours in India are not unaware of this fact and will greatly appreciate if we do not compromise our living faith-experience (Christianubhava). In the Indian context, we need to develop a ‘Theo-Christo-centered (Nara-Hari) theology of Religion’ rather than a Theo- or Christo-centred one.
Each occasion of dialogue-in-praxis, therefore, need not be a situation of dialogue-in-theological-issues; if it is, specialists should deal with them. The uniqueness of Christ is not an extra-ordinary claim made by some ordinary people; it is a witness borne out by individuals and by a community of faith. The salvific experience brings about a complete change (meta-noia) in a person’s total life-pattern, so much so that it provides deep courage to pursue any risk. The sheer joy (khara) of such personal and communal experience compels a person to share it with anyone who cares to listen or wishes to also participate in the experience of the Ultimate (Brahmanubhava). This joy (ananda) is the content and subject matter of Christian faith-experience (anubhava) and witness (marturia). There is no need to be ashamed of it; there is no need to be apologetic about it. The dialogue-in-confrontation may encourage the individual, and community, to develop an unapologetic theology of dialogue in our own context and situation.

Suggested Readings:
INTER-FaITH DIALOGue AT GRASS ROOT LEVEL

History of dialogue among the people of different cultures, different religions and ideologies is as old as the human civilization itself; so also the methodology applied in such exercises. Plato immortalized the process, and the method, through his most loved treatise on the life of his Guru, Socrates, and other philosophical works.

Twentieth century can be marked as the century of dialogues. There was hardly any sphere of human life, and concern, that was not, directly or indirectly, affected by this process. Many wars were averted, many disputes were settled, many problems were solved and many crises were resolved with the help of this process of understanding and reconciliation. The process must go on if the same peace and harmony has to be maintained and enhanced in this century too.

Human life today is multi-dimensional; the fast expanding globalization process is forcing many unwilling humans to accept the fact, if they would like to survive the onslaught of the process. Pluralism is not only a part of human personality; it is the very part of social, political, economic and religious situation of the world in which we find ourselves to live in. In the context of religious pluralism, a reality all around the world, an exploration into different religions and cultures will strengthen communal harmony among the members of emerging global villages. This exploration leads us into dialogue with people of different faiths and cultures, recognizing their existence, acknowledging positive elements, without compromising religious convictions.

The church leaders – ministerial as well as lay, along with the Christian community in general, needs to be educated/trained for this task in the this millennium.

One can remember with appreciation, and gratitude, the contributions of structured dialogue process that was initiated and developed by the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church. They have been first to institutionalized the dialogue process and have brought leaders of various religions at the table to engage in serious conversation on the matters that concern the people of their respective communities and world at large. In this short paper, I wish to present the recent contribution of Lutheran Churches in this continued process of dialoguing among the people of different faiths for communal harmony and mutual understanding of their witnessing faith, through the involvement of local congregations and Christian individuals.

The plan can be suitably amended and augmented as per the needs and contexts of the community.

LWF initiative

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) wishes to exhort the member churches in India, as well as in other parts of the world, to participate in the study project so that the impact of inter-faith dialogue on the life and mission of churches may be studied and evaluated. It is hoped that the project, and the results, will be practical and relevant to the life and witness of member churches. It is also hoped that the dialogue-study will not be conducted in isolation. A very useful
suggestion is made, by way of the guideline, to include equal number of Hindu partners in each dialogue study group. This study is for a period of three years, starting from 1999 and its result will be made available to the member churches.

**Aims and Objectives**
To undertake systematic study to understand religious and philosophical concepts in Hinduism and Christianity.
To understand prevailing attitudes and practices of Hindus and Christians.
To seek and promote friendship, understanding, reciprocity and co-operation between Hindus and Christians.
To inculcate tolerance and peaceful coexistence, without losing sight of guiding principles of love and justice, among the people of different faiths.
To provide a proper setting for mutual witness.
To seek ways and means for the expression of faith, through acts of loving concern, in a concrete and practical way.
To foster peace, reconciliation and mutual respect between Hindu and Christian communities.
To work unceasingly towards communal harmony in a religiously plural society, such as ours, in India.
To establish an inter-religious forum for discussing subjects of common concerns, such as world peace, ecological crisis, role of religion in social, political and economic context, etc.
To bring out the contribution of Lutheran Churches towards promotion of inter-faith relations.

**Terms of reference**
The program is to be prepared, keeping in mind the needs and the expectations of the laity- both Hindus and Christians. It has to be life oriented, relevant to the daily lives of the people, dealing with very practical issues. It is recognized that much intellectual and academic exercises have already taken place, and the time has come to filter it down to the ground realities.
The programme is oriented towards mutual sharing and is not, in any way, directed towards conversion motives. The Hindu partners in dialogue should not be left in any doubt about the sincerity of their counter-part among Christians.
It is also suggested that theological issues, as far as possible, should be kept out-side the scope of discussions in the dialogue groups.
Meetings, in which maximum participation of each and every individual is possible, will be most suitable. They will provide time for sharing faith stories, interaction on matters of common concerns and opportunities to form a new relationship of everlasting friendship at personal levels.
Formation of Study Groups
The Study Group shall be formed under the following guidelines:

Five Representative Lutheran congregations within United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India shall be selected.
From these selected congregations, five members, preferably those working in church/secular institutions will be invited to be a unit group.
The unit groups will invite five members from Hindu community, who are in the same wavelength as they, to be the partners in dialogue.
The difficulty in defining Hinduism is well recognized; so also the movements for the self-identity of Dalits and Tribals within the Hindu fold. It is suggested that the problem is not to be overlooked and the participation of dalits and tribal in the dialogue groups should be consciously ascertained.
Similar groups may be formed in other parts of the world.

Criteria for membership
The members for the dialogue groups shall be carefully selected in order to provide proper representations to every section of membership in the Church.
Majority of members should be those engaged in secular professions and living in religiously pluralistic communities dominated by the Hindus.
There shall be a representation of women and youth in the group.
Care shall be taken to ascertain the willingness of the members and their commitment to the study project.

Methodology for working in dialogue groups
The groups shall appoint their own Chairperson/moderator and recording secretaries.
The core unit groups shall meet 6-8 times over a period of a year for down-to-earth dialogue-meetings.
The time and place of group meetings shall be decided by the group. (It is suggested that the groups meet at the homes of each members in turn)
Records of each meeting will be prepared and kept by each group, which can be shared with other groups.

There shall be an annual meeting of all the members of core unit groups in which the experiences will be shared and reports will be analyzed.

Agenda for regular meetings
The agenda and the general topics for discussion/information shall be decided by the groups in their previous meeting.
It is suggested that the matters that concern the social, economic, spiritual and political life of the community in general should have the priority for sharing sessions.

**Meeting Plan**
Meeting with the Pastors of the congregation to raise awareness on the concern for religious dialogue and national harmony will be taken up.
Meeting will be arranged with selected members, both from Christian and Hindu communities, to raise awareness about interfaith dialogues and their role in promoting religious harmony. There will be 6-8 sessions in one year in actual dialogue sessions. Agenda will be worked out by the members attending the second meeting with the guide lines provided by the Organization Committee.
At the end of the 8 sessions of dialogues at congregational level the Organization Committee will study the results of the congregational dialogue meetings and further course of action for the following two years.

**Preliminary experiences**
The Church as an institution and a worshipping community takes some time to get involved in something that is not directly related to the spiritual aspect of their faith. One needs to be patient and persuasive in his approach as Rev. Dr. Ingo Wulforst, Department of Theology and Study Secretary for Church and People of Other Faiths at Lutheran World Federation agrees and points out what Dr. Hans Ucko, Officer on Inter-religious Relations of the World Council of Churches stated in an interview: "We should remember that inter-religious dialogue is not an ambulance. It is a prophylactic medicine (*) Inter-faith dialogue has to go slow in order to go deep." (Current Dialogue 37, June 2001, 54).

The pastors and the participants require more time to prepare themselves for the group interaction in an inter-religious forum. The churches and the Christians were not taken into confidence into any dialogue programme, which was so far supposed to be for the leaders and theologians. It is the Lutheran Church under LWF, which has taken courageous step in involving congregations and some individual members in this process. The churches are enthusiastic and supportive; some members are very excited and cooperative. It was a very encouraging sign, and the UELC is getting ready to support the congregations in their efforts and new venture. I feel that the most difficult task for ground work in informing the Churches, forming the groups, setting procedures and the agendas was well taken care of in the last two years and now we can move a step more in seeing the groups in interaction.

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1 Rig.I. 91.20; III. 1.23; V.85.25; VI 31.1.
2 Atharva. VIII. 6.25
3 Atharva. VI.2.3.
4 Aitareya Brah. VII.18; VII.31.1.
RV.28

RV.I.179; V. 162:5-8
RV. X.39-40
RV. X.145 & 159, though the name may be fictitious
ibid
RV.X 89; 95, 145,151,159,189
Chh. up. IV.
RV.X.85.36
Aiterey. Brah.I.3.5
RV. X.55.24

RV.X.85

RV.I.116; 177.20
RV.X.27.12
RV.X.85.1-47
RV.I.109.2
RV. X.85
Aiterey Brah.II.2.23
A.V.III.18.1-6; V.17.8
Brahad. Up. IV.
RV. X.85
RV 1.167.6
RV. X.85.38 A.V. XIV. 161
T.S.VI.6.4.3; A.Br.III.23; G.Br.II.3.19
RV.X. 18.7; 40; 2, VII.5.7, A.V. XVIII.3.1.2
AV. IX.5.27-28
Cf. Deut.25:1-10
AV. XVIII.2.1
RV.40.2
RV. X.85.33
RV.X.85.26
Cf. I. Cor. 14:34f
RV.I.124.8; IV.58.8; X.86. 10;VII.2.5 VI.75.4,1 IX.96.9X.168.2
S.B. XIV 3.1.35
T.S. II. 5.1.5-7
RV. X.85.44.29
S.B.V 2.1.8-10
S.Br. 1.3.7,
RV. VIII.91.1; V.28.1
A.Br.I.2.5
S.Br. V.1.6.10
S.B.V2.1.8
S.B.X.2.3.1; XIV.3.1.35
S.B.XIV.3.1.35
lv R.V.I.126.3
lvii Rv. X.34

lvi RV.X.86.10
lvii R.V.I.126.3
lviii RV.X.85
lix AV.X.30.5. XII.3.14
lx I.109.2
lxi Taitriya Samhita VI.2.1.1.1
lxii Tait.Sam. VI.5.82; SB.IV.4.2.13
lxiii RV.VII.4.8
lxiv RV.I.124.7
lxv AV.I.17.1
lxvi RV.III.31.2.1.124;II.17.7;AV.I.17.1
lxvii RV.II.17.7
lxviii RV.III.31.2
lxix RV.I.70.5; TS.III.1.9;4-5
lxx S.Br.5.2.20
lxxi S.Br. XI.4.3.2.
lxxii RV.I.92.4
lxxiii RV.I.167.4
lxxiv RV.X.95.15
lxxv X.95.15
lxxvi RV.IV.33.17
lxxvii SB.III.2.36