INDIAN CHRISTIANITY: THROUGH HISTORICAL TRANSITIONARY MODES TO CONTEMPORARY POLYVALENT CHRISTIANITY

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Abstract: This article explores the historical evolution and contemporary features of Indian Christianity, tracing its journey from the arrival of Apostle Thomas in A.D. 52 to its current status as a minority religion in a Hindu-majority nation. It examines key transitional modes, including assimilation with Syrian traditions, resistance against Portuguese Catholic impositions, vernacularization through Bible translations, and indigenization through revivals and social reforms. The narrative highlights the interplay between foreign missionary influences and local adaptations, resulting in a uniquely Indian expression of Christianity. Contemporary Indian Christianity has three distinctive features: its inter-religious nature shaped by theological permeability with other faiths, its holistic approach to mission addressing multidimensional poverty and social inequalities, and its resilience amid rising persecution from radical Hindutva movements. The article also discusses the diverse denominational landscape, including Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants, Pentecostals, and independent churches, and their varied theological and missional priorities. Despite challenges, Indian Christianity remains a dynamic and polyvalent faith, embodying cultural integration, social transformation, and spiritual resilience. This study underscores the enduring adaptability and relevance of Christianity in India, offering insights into its historical transitions and contemporary significance in a pluralistic and socio-politically complex context.

INTRODUCTION

Christianity's early emergence in West Asia, its subsequent reach to South Asia with the arrival of Jesus' disciple Thomas, and its spread to Central Asia in the form of Syriac Christianity, "Asia has the longest and perhaps the most complicated history with the Christian faith."[1] However, despite these long-standing relations with Christianity, today, "Asian Christians live as minorities among people of other faiths."[2] Indian Christianity characterizes this minority status very well, as the Christians in the region continually make sense of their faith as they interact with the normative aspects of other major World religions (Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism) along with other socio-economic and political factors. This chapter, while providing a brief account of Indian Christian history, also calls attention to the distinctive theological features of Indian Christianity as it engages with significant contextual trends in the region. In the first part of this chapter, I briefly recount the various major transitory modes in the formation of Indian Christian history as it traversed from Christianity's arrival in the first century, through a period of conquest, migration and resistance in the 1400s-1600s; then through accommodation, and vernacularization in the 1600s-1800s; and finally, through revivals and indigenization in the 1900s. Second, considering the diverse theologies of Indian Christianity, I highlight three distinctive

[1] Lalsangkima Pachuau, *World Christianity: A Historical and Theological Introduction*. (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2018), 63.

[2] Sebastian Kim and Kirsteen Kim. *Christianity As a World Religion: An Introduction*. Second edition. (London; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016) 25.

characteristics of contemporary Indian Christianity: inter-religious nature, holistic and resilient amid religious persecution.

TRANSITORY MODES IN THE HISTORY OF INDIAN CHRISTIANITY:

ARRIVAL AND ASSIMILATION:

The beginning of Indian Christianity can be traced back to the long-held tradition that Jesus' disciple, Thomas, arrived and preached the Gospel, establishing churches. Although there have been speculations around the historical reliability of Thomas' arrival, the tradition claims that the apostle arrived at the Malabar coast in A.D. 52.[3] Furthermore, in light of the available evidence of maritime trade routes between West Asia and South India, as Robert Eric Frykenberg notes, it is "not implausible" to claim Thomas' arrival and the subsequent establishment of a Christian community.[4]

After almost two hundred years, in 345, a merchant named Thomas Cana arrived from the Persian Empire with four hundred Christians and two Syrian bishops,[5] reviving the pre-existing Thomas Christians. Consequently, the South Indian Thomas Christianity (including parts of today's Kerala and Tamil Nadu) embodied Syrian theology, worship forms, and customs. Such a Syrian influenced Christianity, assimilated and localized into the south Indian social class-caste structures. Subsequently, from the fourth to the sixteenth century, the church and its doctrines (influenced by the Syriac rites) assimilated into the local contexts and have become, in Francis Thonippara's words, "truly an Indian Church rooted in Indian soil."[6] Such an assimilated and localized Christianity remained unchallenged for centuries until the arrival of the Portuguese in the sixteenth century.

CONQUEST, MIGRATION, AND RESISTANCE:

During the Portuguese period, the story of Indian Christianity shifted due to conquest, transregional migration, and resistance. The pathway for these transitory modes began when the Portuguese merchant Vasco Da Gama arrived on the shores of Kozhikode (Calicut) on May 20, 1498, claiming that "we come to seek Christians and spices."[7] However, the Portuguese had long-term plans of conquest.

The Portuguese declared parts of South India as the 'State of India' (*Estado da India)* in 1505, and appointed Alfonso de Albuquereque as the Portuguese 'Governor of India' in 1509, marking a new beginning in the Indian socio-politics and religious history. Alfonso de Albuquereque, "a genial colonizer and administrator,"[8] transferred the Portuguese base from Kochi to Goa, as "the conditions in Goa were favourable for a conquest."[9] With five islands located ideally between the Muslim kingdoms of the north

[3] Susan Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings: Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society, 1700-1900*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 244.

[4] Robert Eric Frykenberg. "Christianity in South India Since 1500: Historical Studies of Transcultural Interactions Within Hindu-Muslim Environments." *Dharma Deepika* 1, no. 2 (1997): 4.

[5] C. P. Mathew and M. M. Thomas, *The Indian Churches of Saint Thomas*. Revised Edition. (Delhi: ISPCK, 2005), 20.

[6] Francis Thonippara, "From Colonization to Romanization: The Impact of the Synod of Udayamperur on Saint Thomas Christian in *Heritage of Early Christian Communities in India: Some Landmarks*, edited by G. John Samuel (Chennai, India: Institute of Asian Studies, 2010) 111.

[7] Quoted in Robert Eric Frykenberg. *Christianity in India: From Beginnings to the Present*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 121.

[8] Leonard Fernando and George Gispert-Sauch. *Christianity in India*. (New Delhi: Penguin, 2004), 113.

[9] Fernando and Gispert-Sauch. *Christianity in India*, 114.

and the Hindu Vijayanagar kingdom of the south, Albuquerque allied with the Hindu feudal lords.[10] While the Portuguese were critical and intolerant towards the Muslims, they adopted a tolerant outlook toward the Hindus, hoping that they would convert to Catholicism.

However, such a tolerant attitude soon started to fade. Starting in 1540, policies were instituted to indicate intolerance towards non-Christians. Forceful conversions, demolition of Hindu temples, and other intolerant actions ensued (especially in Goa) under the Portuguese conquest. The Portuguese policies were also detrimental to the local Christians as the Portuguese "sought to purify the native Christians from the influence of their former Hindu traditions and customs."[11] Consequently, religious persecution, poor living conditions, and the excessive land taxation prompted the native Christians to leave Goa in the 1540s-50s. Later on, the attacks from the Sultan of Bijapur (1570) and Shambaji, the Maratha king (1683) on Goa also prompted further migration among native Christians to Kanara.

While these transregional developments occurred in Goa and Karnataka, a different story played out in Kerala: the story of resistance. The local Syrian bishops resisted any attempts to lure the Syrian Christians or to replace Syrian ceremonies with Latin. The unrest between the Syrians and the Catholics came to its pinnacle in 1597 with the death of the Syrian bishop Mar Abraham, and the Catholic Archbishop of Goa, Alexis de Menezes, saw to it that no new bishop should arrive in Malabar from Mesopotamia to replace the deceased bishop.[12] Using this Syrian leadership vacuum, Menezes set his agenda "to purify all the Churches from heresy and errors."[13] In 1599, by convoking a Synod at Udayamperur (popularly known as the Synod of Diamper), which lasted for seven days, the Archbishop made steps to establish the Pope's supremacy over the Syrian Christians, and instructed all Syrian clergy to institute the Latin rituals.

However, a good section of the Syrian Thomas Christians under the leadership of Archdeacon Thomas resisted the Portuguese Latinization, leading to an insurgency by local Syrian Christians that resulted in the Coonen Cross Resolution against the Portuguese and the Roman church on January 3, 1653.[14] The Coonen Cross Resolution resulted in the division of the Syrian Christians, marking "the end of the unity of the Kerala Church."[15] "The ones who remained with the Roman Church came to be known as the 'Pazhayakur' (old party), and the ones who maintained their separation from the Roman Church came to be known as the 'Puthenkur' (new party),"[16] re-integrating their ecclesial order with the Syrian Jacobite Church as they reintroduced oriental customs, and reinstated Syriac as the ecclesiastical language.

While the colonially minded Portuguese administration ventured on conquering Goa with its militarized Christian policies (unscathed by the Jesuit protests against the colonial imposition of

[10] In light of the ongoing attempts to resist the Muslim encroachment into the south, the Hindu empire of Vijayanagara was also happy to establish bonds with the Christian Portuguese traders. For a brief history of the Vijayanagara empire, see (Pillalamarri 2015, https://thediplomat.com/2015/06/450-years-ago-this-battle-changed-the-course-of-indian-history/ accessed on December 2, 2021)

[11] Carmine D'Costa. "Migration of Christians from Goa and the Making of the Mangalorean Christian Community in South Kanara (1560-1763)." *Indian Church History Review* 44.1 (2010), 44. Some of the polices were: the 1540 rigor of mercy, the 1541 conformity of the holy faith, and the 1684 anti-Konkani legislation.

[12] Quoted in Allan Varghese, The Reformative and Indigenous Face of the Indian Pentecostal Movement. *International Journal for Indian Studies*, 4, no. 2 (2019). 3.

[13] Mathew, and Thomas, *The Indian Churches of Saint Thomas*, 32

[14] The local Syrian Christians gathered outside a church at Mattancherry in Cochin and took the oath on the crooked-shaped stone cross. The word 'coonen' translates to 'crooked.'

[15] Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala History and its Makers*. (Kottayam, Kerala: DC Books, 2008), 122.

[16] Varghese, "The Reformative and Indigenous Face of the Indian Pentecostal Movement," 4.

Christianity), with the native Goan Christians migrating to neighboring kingdoms and the local Kerala Syrian Christians resisting the Catholic invasion, some missionaries ventured on to communicate the Gospel. Most notably, the life and work of Francis Xavier and Robert De Nobili are noteworthy for their missionary efforts of accommodating the local elements to Christian faith, contrasted with the Portuguese militarized Christianity.

ACCOMMODATION AND VERNACULARIZATION:

When Francis Xavier arrived among the Paravas in 1542, Xavier found Christians who had converted ten years ago due to a tactical alliance as the local caste group sought military protection from the Catholics against the Muslim merchants. Xavier's two-year presence among the Paravas of Tamil Nadu (considered low caste) is one of the early missionary examples of attempting to truly inform the locals of the catholic beliefs and practices beyond mere colonial impositions. Although Xavier could only teach them "to make the sign of the cross and to recite garbled Tamil renderings of the Creed and the Ave Maria," Xavier consolidated a new and distinctive Christian tradition among the Paravas.[17]

However, after Xavier, an Italian Jesuit, Roberto de Nobili (1577-1656), took intentional steps to accommodate Indian cultural norms in communicating the Gospel. De Nobili lived in Madurai for almost 40 years (1606- 1644) and is known for his lifestyle missionary witness among the prominent Tamil class. "If Francis Xavier has dealt with the lowest, most polluting segments of Tamil society down the Fisher Coast, Roberto de Nobili dealt exclusively with the highest and most pure."[18] De Nobili immersed himself in the South Indian Brahmic culture, embodied as a *sannyasi*, and "sought to remove the barriers that lay between the Hindus of caste and faith in Christ by stripping both the Christian message and the Christian messenger of their respective 'cultural encoding' and embracing the local cultural norms.[19] In addition, de Nobili became well versed in the Tamil language, "developed a Tamil writing style far surpassing the minimal requirements of the colloquial; he learned Sanskrit, Hinduism's classical language, and was probably the first European to be fluent in it."[20] De Nobili translated some parts of the Scripture and Catholic liturgies into Tamil vocabulary, which became valuable for the protestant missionaries who translated the Bible into local vernacular languages. De Nobili's approach to mission was revolutionary to the extent that it brought a new understanding of Gospel accommodation and set the ground for vernacularization that resulted from translation.

After de Nobili, Bible translation became a crucial transitional mode that led the future trajectory of Indian Christianity. On July 9, 1706, Bartholomew Ziegenbalg and Henry Pluetschau arrived at Tranquebar. Subsequently, numerous Lutheran missionaries joined the mission in Tranqubar (also known as Tarangambadi). For the Protestant missionaries, education and church building went hand in hand. Therefore, Ziegenbalg and other subsequent missionaries began translating the Bible into the vernacular languages as a vital step forward in their education mission. With his hope to present the Gospel to the natives, Ziegenbalg first completed and printed the Tamil New Testament between 1714 and 1715. Although Ziegenbalg's version had to be revised multiple times until it was fit for local reading, as

[17] Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings*, 328.

[18] Robert Eric Frykenberg, "India" in Adrian Hastings, *A World History of Christianity*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 169.

[19] Cody C. Lorance, "Cultural Relevance and Doctrinal Soundness: The Mission of Roberto de Nobili." *Missiology* 33, no.4 (2005), 417.

[20] Francis X. Clooney, "Roberto de Nobili, Adaptation and the Reasonable Interpretation of Religion." *Missiology* 18, no. 1 (1990), 26.

Stephen Neil writes, Ziegenbalg's achievement was considerable; for the first time, the entire New Testament had been made available in an Indian language."[21]

For the other missionaries who translated the Bible into other south Indian languages, Ziegenbalg's work served as a foundation. Benjamin Schultze, another Lutheran missionary, was a successor to Ziegenbalg. Not only did he take the task of completing the Old Testament translation to Tamil in 1724 (which Ziegenbalg started), but he also became the first person to translate "the New Testament into Telugu in 1727 and the Old Testament by 1732."[22] While Lutheran Missionaries began translating the Bible into Tamil and Telugu, the English missionaries translated it into Kannada and Malayalam. As the Danish political influence waned with the ascendancy of the English East India Company, various British Christian missionary societies took on the task of translating the Bible into Indian languages.

Western protestant missionary societies during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries pioneered numerous literary endeavors in North Indian states as they embarked on translating the Bible into local languages. Although Christianity had a minimal presence in North India until the eighteenth century, with the arrival of the British missionaries, notably the 'Serampore Trio'—William Carey, Joshua Marshman, and William Ward, Christianity became a strong social influencer. The Trio translated the Bible into six languages— Sanskrit, Bengali, Hindi, Marathi, Odia, and Assamese.[23] These translation efforts paved the Indian Christian's trajectory towards vernacularization, social reform, and indigenization.

For example, in Kerala, as Hepzibah Israel rightly points out, "this Christian population in general had no recourse to reading the Bible either in Syriac or Malayalam, [but] unlike other parts of India, the Bible was first translated into Malayalam not for non-Christians but for a largely Christian population."[24] Therefore, upon the availability of the Bible in the local Malayalam vernacular, the locally reform-minded clergy of Syrian churches(who also helped the missionaries in their translation efforts) broke away from the Syriac liturgy, beginning to celebrate rites in Malayalam.[25] Eventually, this led the reform-minded Syrian Christians to establish themselves as the Mar Thoma Church, leading the way to forming the Mar Thoma Evangelistic Association in 1888. As the Bible became readily available in local languages, the wave of reformations and revivals emerged, leaving a "strong foundation of an indigenous Church in India."[26] During the European translation efforts, the native "helpers" and leaders who played a pivotal role in helping the European translation efforts also led the charge in reforming the existing Christian communities towards vernacularization.

In speaking of vernacularization, it is also important to highlight that the accessibility of the vernacular Bible and education has empowered the Dalits and women. [27] The Dalits were "forbidden to read and hear the sacred scriptures of the Hindus. Thus, they were cut off from all forms of literacy,

[21] Stephen C. Neill, *A History of Christianity in India: 1707-1858*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 34.

[22] Hephzibah Israel, "Protestant Translations of the Bible in Indian Languages." *Religion Compass* vol. 4, no. 2, (2010), 95.

[23] For more details, see Vishal and Ruth Mangalwadi, *The Legacy of William Carey: A Model for Transformation of a Culture* (Crossway Books: 1999).

[24] Israel, "Protestant Translations of the Bible in Indian Languages," 94.

[25] Fernando and Gispert-Sauch. *Christianity in India*, 176.

[26] Daniel Jeyaraj, "Early Tamil Bible Translation in Tranquebar." *Dharma Deepika vol.* 1, no. 1(1997), 75.

[27] For example, see Chakali Chandra Sekhar, "Dalit Women and Colonial Christianity: First Telugu Bible Women as Teachers of Wisdom." *Economic & Political Weekly* vol. 56, no. 11(2021), 57-63.

especially from Hindu sacred texts."[28] Such is the context in which the Protestant missionaries gave the Dalits access to study at the mission schools and listen to the Biblical teachings. Thus, the "accessibility of the Christian sacred Scriptures was an opportunity for empowerment."[29]

While the vernacularization of the Scripture brought the liberationist perspective to Dalits and women in regions of India, the Western Christian missionary advocacy also brought forth certain social reform in India. For example, the Serampore missionaries—William Carey, William Ward, and Joshua Marshman—were strong advocates against Sati—the widow-burning practice—prevalent across the State of Bengal in India. In his letter to Dr. Ryland, William Carey writes on his experience of April 1, 1799, saying, "as I was returning from Calcutta I saw …a woman burning herself with the corpse of her husband, for the first time in my life."[30] This exposure moved Carey to study and propose the abolition of Sati to the Governor Lord Wellesley. Carey's proposal involved two aspects: a) a statistical account of all the deaths (through Sati) that happened within a 30-mile radius around Calcutta, and b)a religious account of all the Hindu texts that report that Sati is not a Sacred duty enjoined with Hinduism. Eventually, the partnership of the Serampore Trio with the Indian Hindu reformers led Lord William Bentick to abolish Sati in 1829.

REVIVAL AND INDIGENIZATION:

The availability of the Bible in their language provided a sense of authority and autonomy to the local reform-minded Indian leaders to lead reforms in their existing churches and to reach out to non-Christians. Additionally, with the rise of an anti-Western, nationalist socio-political context, Indian Christianity entered an era of revival of indigenization. Such a local reformative and revival impetus paved the way for Pentecostalism in India as part of the "Indian-initiated" indigenization process, shaking off the captivity of Western missionary Christianity.[31]

One of the earliest revivals in South India was the *Christianpettah* Revival, led by John Christian Aroolappen, a trained Anglican catechist. In his diary for August 8, 1860, Aroolappen recorded: "In the month of June some of our people praised the Lord by unknown tongues, with their interpretations.... My son and a daughter and three others went to visit their own relations, in three villages, who are under the Church Missionary Society, they also received the Holy Ghost. Some prophesy, some speak by unknown tongues with their interpretations."[32] Aroolappen began to preach beyond the CMS churches following the apostolic pattern of traveling evangelists and embraced an indigenous attitude when limiting the western missionary influence on the revival by accepting little or no western funding.

Aroolappen's revival became influential in reforming Christianity, leading to more reform-minded churches, from the Mar Thoma church to the Brethren and Pentecostal churches. Consequently, in 1926, the first indigenous Pentecostal denomination was formed as "South Indian Pentecostal Church of God (SIPC)" under the leadership of K.E. Abraham,[33] insisting on indigenous leadership. This instance prompted SIPC to send missionaries to various parts of India, eventually removing the 'South' from the title and reframing themselves as the 'Indian Pentecostal Church of God' (IPC).

[28] Sathianathan Clarke, "Viewing the Bible through the Eyes and Ears of Subalterns in India." *Biblical Interpretation* vol. 10, no. 3(2002), 256.

[29] Sathianathan. "Viewing the Bible through the Eyes and Ears of Subalterns in India," 256.

[30] Quoted in George Smith, *The Life of William Carey* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons), 1909,78, 79.

[31] Paul Joshua, *Christianity Remade: The Rise of Indian-initiated Churches.* (Texas: Baylor University Press, 2022).

[32] Aroolappen quoted in McGee 1996,113.

[33] Varghese, "The Reformative and Indigenous Face of the Indian Pentecostal Movement," 11.

In the north Indian setting, the Sialkot revival of 1904, the Dholka revival of 1905, the revival of 1905 in Khasi Hills, and the Mukti revival of 1905 became pivotal in establishing Pentecostalism. Noteably, it is essential to attribute the influence of Pandita Ramabai's leadership, who held the balance of social reformation, religious revivalist faith, and an anti-western attitude. Being a Hindu widow, a mother of a girl child, and a woman with reformative ambitions, Ramabai firmly believed that women's leadership is imperative for the fight against inequalities propagated by the Hindu caste system. Although Ramabai stood against some of the missionaries in India who embodied a colonial attitude, Christianity gave her an ideological imagination for social reforms. In 1889, Ramabai started Sharada Sadan (Home of learning) in Bombay, and "was the first ever residential school for high caste Hindu widows and unmarried girls in Maharashtra."[34] Later, Ramabai established the 'Mukti Mission' (Home of Salvation) and a rescue home named 'Kripa Sadan' (Home of Mercy), which carried a more Christian expression. While Ramabai continued to be a strong advocate for women, her openness to revive Indian Christianity began in "the Revival of 1905" at the Mukti Mission, one of the early expressions of Indian Pentecostalism.[35] During this revival, which lasted for the following years, Ramabai writes, "most of the workers, and many of the girls and boys have received greater blessings. The fruit of the blessing began to manifest itself in deepening spiritual life, continuance in earnest prayer, greater zeal in winning souls for Christ, increasing love, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost."[36] The Revival of 1905 is a pivotal historical gathering, from which girls and women went to other parts of North India to establish churches and social reform efforts. Numerous contemporary Pentecostal and charismatics in various north Indian states see the current growth as an aftermath of early twentieth-century revivals.

Simultaneously, in other parts of India, the anti-Western political sentiment also led numerous revival-minded local leaders to the path of indigenization in their respective denominations to be more Indian-initiated in their approach. Even though the vision for a unified church in South India was forming from the early 1900s, it took till 1947 (immediately after India gained political independence from Britain) for the main protestant denominations to officially inaugurate the new church as the Church of South India (CSI). Although the political independence of India was not a direct reason for such a unified church, the increasing sense of nationalism in the country did influence it.[37] especially in ensuring that churches be "authentically Indian church in matters of finance and personnel."[38] In 1970, the churches in north India also followed the trend in establishing the Church of North India (CNI).

The transitional modes of revival and indigenization also led to the establishment of various Christian Ashrams, in an attempt to imagine a Hindu way of Christianity, for example, in North India, notably the Sat Tal Christian Ashram (established in 1930), in South India, the Shantivanam in Tamil Nadu (established in 1950) and Kurisumala Ashram in Kerala (established in 1958). The primary aim of these ashrams is to "establish a way of contemplative life, based alike on the traditions of Christian

[34] Meera Kosambi, "Indian Response to Christianity, Church and Colonialism: Case of Pandita Ramabai," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 27, No.43/44, (1992), 63.

[35] For a general introductory discussion on the Mukti revival, see Allan H. Anderson, "Pandita Ramabai, the Mukti Revival and Global Pentecostalism." *Transformation,* vol 23, no. 1 (2006), 37–48.

[36] Quoted in Adhav, S. M. *Pandita Ramabai*. (Madras: The Christian Literature Society, 1979), 217-218.

[37] Joshva Raj, "United and Uniting Churches," in *Christianity in South and Central Asia*, edited by Kenneth R. Ross, Daniel Jeyaraj, and Todd M. Johnson. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 239.

[38] George Oommen, "Challenging Identity and Crossing Borders: Unity in the Church of South India." *Word & World,* vol. 25, no. 1(2005), 62.

monasticism and of Hindu Sannyas."[39] From an educational perspective, the National Biblical Catechetical and Liturgical Center in Bangalore (founded in 1967) sought to "promote the renewal of the Church in an Indian context."[40] Such contextual efforts have also led to the notion of "Churchless Christianity"[41] where groups such as *Jesu Bhakta* (devotees of Jesus), *Yeshu Satsang* (Jesus truth-gatherings), and *Yeshu Darbar* (the royal court of Jesus) have reimagined the indigenous way to be Christians while believing in the Lordship of Jesus Christ, but belonging to their Hindu cultural customs.

STATISTICAL OVERVIEW

Collectively, the Christian population in India currently is the "largest Christian population in the [South Asian] region, [with] more than 60 million."[42] Additionally, as Gina A. Zurlo notes, "the country is home to historic Orthodox and Catholic churches as well as tens of millions of Protestants and Independents."[43] The Orthodox constitute about 0.4 percent (4,975,000), with Catholics at 1.5 percent (19,882,000), Protestants at 1.6 percent (21,478,000), Evangelicals at .8 percent (10,027.000), the Pentecostals at 1.6 percent (20,485,000), and the independents at 1.5 percent (18,990,000).[44] While Catholic denominations include Latin, Syro-Malabar, and Syro-Malankara churches, Orthodox include Malankara Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church (MJSOC), Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church (MOSC), and the Malabar Independent Church (Thozhiyur Church). On one end, the Protestant classification includes the western-originated branches such as Lutheran, Anglican, Methodist, and Presbyterians (which constitute 'mainline' protestants); on the other end, such a categorization can also include indigenous protestant churches such as the Mar Thoma church and the Church of South India (CSI). There is also a growing presence of evangelicals of Reformed and Baptist traditions. Finally, while Pentecostal denominations involve The Pentecostal Mission (TPM), Indian Pentecostal Church of God (IPC), Assemblies of God (AG), Church of God, Sharon Bible Fellowship, and New Life Church of God, there has been a rise of a plethora of independent churches that individual charismatic leaders have founded. Most recently, the Calvary Temple in Andhra Pradesh, founded by Satish Kumar, claims to have "close to 200,000 members who worship in four services."[45]

Geographically, the South and Northeastern states of India comprise a significant minority Christian population compared to the Northern states. State-wise, according to the Government of India, the 2011 census,[46] Kerala tops the list of south Indian states with 6.2 million Christians constituting 18.38

[39] Sagaraj, Antonysamy. 2013. "Christianity in India: A Focus on Inculturation," *Research Papers of the Anthropological Institute* Vol. 1*,* 129. accessed online on December 1, 2021. https://rci.nanzan-u.ac.jp/jinruiken/publication/item/ronshu1-06%20Sagayaraj.pdf

[40] For more details on the National Biblical Catechetical and Liturgical Center, see the link: http://www.nbclcindia.org/history.html. Accessed on December 4, 2021.

[41] Herbert E. Hoefer, *Churchless Christianity*. (California: W. Carey Library, 2001).

[42] Gina A. Zurlo, "A Demographic Profile of Christianity in South and Central Asia," in *Christianity in South and Central Asia,* edited by Kenneth R. Ross, Daniel Jeyaraj, and Todd M. Johnson (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishing, 2019), 12.

[43] Zurlo, "A Demographic Profile of Christianity in South and Central Asia, "12.

[44] Todd M. Johnson and Gina A. Zurlo quoted in Leonard Fernando, "North India" in *Christianity in South and Central Asia,* edited by Kenneth R. Ross, Daniel Jeyaraj, and Todd M. Johnson (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishing, 2019), 120.

[45] James, Jonathan D. "Global, 'Glocal' and Local Dynamics in Calvary Temple: India's Fastest Growing Megachurch". In *Handbook of Megachurches*, edited by Stephen Hunt (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2020), 303.

[46] "Christian Religion Census 2011," *Census of India 2011*. https://www.census2011.co.in/data/religion/3-christianity.html. Last accessed, November 24, 2023.COVID-19 and other geopolitical aspects resulted in the delay of conducting the 2021 Census. It will take place in 2023, and the results will be published the following year.

percent of the State population. Tamil Nadu follows with 4.4 million (6.12 percent), Karnataka with 1.1 million (1.87 percent), and Andhra Pradesh with 1.1 million[47] (1.34 percent) and Goa with 366 thousand (25.10 percent). In Northeast India, although the Christian population is not majority in the region, Christianity is the largest religion in five states, namely Arunachal Pradesh with 418,732 (30.26 percent), Manipur with 1.1 million (41.29 percent), Meghalaya with 2.2 million (74.59 percent), Mizoram with 956,331 (87.16 percent), and Nagaland with 1.7 million (87.93 percent). In North India, Jharkhand with 1.4 million (4.30 percent) leads in state-wise percentage of Christians, with Chhattisgarh with 490,542 (1.92 percent) and Punjab with 348,230 (1.26 percent) immediately following.

KEY FEATURES OF CONTEMPORARY INDIAN CHRISTIANITY

Although one can imagine numerous features of contemporary Indian Christianity, I narrow the discussion in this section to three features roughly following Pachuau's paradigm of three "common macro-contextual issues faced in the Majority World": Religiosity, poverty & inequality, and Tensional existence.[48] First, as already introduced, the religious plurality of the region produces the distinctive inter-religious nature of Indian Christianity. Second, the Indian context of multidimensional poverty and inequality provides the holistic approach to the practice of Christian faith, and third, as Christianity remains a minority religion in India, the Christian faith is also characterized by a tensional existence leading to persecution (or the fear of persecution) from majoritarian radical groups.

INTER-RELIGIOUS NATURE OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE CONTEXT OF OTHER RELIGIONS:

Because Christianity is a minority religious group in India, Inter-religiosity has been a trademark of Indian Christianity. Christianity in the region is diverse in its local cultural expressions (along with the denominational diversities), making the theologies of inter-religiosity diverse. These theologies raise the question of how permeable the boundary of particular theologies is in relation to local religions. Theologian Swarup Bar integrates permeability with ecclesiology: "Permeability refers to the phenomenon of the passage of things through porous borders or boundaries." Bar continues, "It would mean that it ought to have borders or boundaries, but those are porous, allowing selective passage of, say, perspectives and people."[49] Various denominations and theologians in the region hold a diverse spectrum of theology of religion that allows varying levels of permeability between Christianity and other religions; the church and other religious communities

On one end, theologians like Stanley J. Samartha and S. Wesley Ariarajah[50] adopt a more inclusive, pluralistic perspective towards other religions and propose a softer boundary between Christ, the church, and the outsider. On the other end, scholars like Lesslie Newbigin[51] and Vinod

[47] This statistic involves Christians from the state of Telangana, as the state of formation did not occur during the 2011 census. The state was officially formed on June 2, 2014, constituting the northwestern part of Andhra Pradesh with Hyderabad as its capital.

[48] Pachuau, *World Christianity*, 111.

[49] Swarup Bar, *The Spirit Shaped Church: A Spirit Ecclesiology in India.* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2021), 49

[50] S. Wesley. Ariarajah, *Strangers or Co-pilgrims?: The Impact of Interfaith Dialogue On Christian Faith and Practice*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017).

[51] Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*. Revised edition. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans, 1995) 160-189.

Ramachandra[52] attempt to provide a more exclusive yet inclusive approach, upholding the uniqueness of Christ and the church. Although the boundary between Christianity and other religions is clear, there is enough porosity in the relational attitude toward the religious other. However, scholars like M. M Thomas still attempt to permeabilize Christianity with the other by imagining three levels of "koinonia-in-Christ." First, the koinonia of the eucharistic community of the church, where people acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and second, a larger koinonia, where people from different faiths who are "inwardly being renewed by their acknowledgment of the ultimacy of the pattern of suffering servanthood as exemplified by the crucified Jesus." Third, a still larger koinonia of those involved people who are "in the power-political struggles for new societies."[53] Through the levels of 'koinonia-in-Christ,' Thomas attempts to soften the borders of Christianity, the church, and other religions.

These varied theologies of religion have influenced how different denominations and Christians have emphasized different priorities in their missional engagements. On one end, there have been calls from mainline traditions "to move away from a mission that targets other religious communities for conversion,"[54] and instead to collaborate with other religious adherents "in promoting the life-centered values of the reign of God."[55] However, on the other end, conversions have been a reality with the emergence of the Pentecostal movement and its emphasis on the Holy Spirit's power over other spirits.[56] One could add that the evangelical and Pentecostal Christians uphold an exclusivist position of the uniqueness of Christ that results in the hard bordering of the church's relation with the non-Christian religions. Pentecostals have not shied away from teaching a total rupture from the old religious traditions, making it clear that there is a hard border between Christianity and other religions. Yet, there is also the growing presence of "Churchless Christianity,"[57] constituted of Hindu followers of Christ who attempt to soften the borders of Christianity with other religio-cultural traditions, with the belief that "when a person from Hinduism turns to Christ, he may do so without giving up socio-religious ties."[58]

However, missiologically, irrespective of where one lands on the spectrum of permeability (with a soft or harder border), the unavoidable challenge of Indian Christianity is presented in how one communicates the Christian Gospel to other religious adherents. Lesslie Newbigin's experience in Tamil Nadu serves as an example of how the daily missiological engagements with other religious adherents not only force the missionary to be creative in theological translation but also add to the unique feature of Christianity. In the mission context of South India, Newbigin writes:

> I have heard speakers use many different Tamil words to explain who he (Jesus) is. He is *Swamy* (Lord). Alternatively, he is *Satguru* (the true teacher). He is *Avatar* (incarnation of God). Or, he is *Kadavul* (the transcendent God) who

[52] Vinoth Ramachandra, *The Recovery of Mission: Beyond the Pluralist Paradigm*. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1997).

[53] M. M. Thomas, "A Christ-centered humanist approach to other religions in the Indian pluralistic context," in Gavin D'Costa (ed). *Christian uniqueness reconsidered: The myth of a pluralistic theology of religions*. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1990), 61.

[54] Ariarajah, *Strangers or Co-pilgrims?*, 124

[55] Ariarajah, *Strangers or Co-pilgrims?*, 125

[56] Sarbeswar Sahoo, Pentecostalism *and Politics of Conversion in India*. (New Delhi, India: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

[57] Hoefer, *Churchless Christianity*.

[58] Natun Bhattacharya, "Exploring Hindu 'Insider Movements': Syncretism or Authentic Contextualization? A Theological and Missiological Appraisal with a Fresh Approach" in Allen L. Yeh and Tite Tienou. *Majority World Theologies: Theologizing From Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Ends of the Earth*. (Littleton: William Carey Publishing, 2018) 97.

> became man. All these words have in common that they place Jesus within a world of ideas formed by the Hindu tradition and embodied in the people's languages.[59]

As Newbigin rightly points out through this example, "one cannot begin to answer the question 'who is Jesus?' without using a language—and therefore a structure of thought—shaped by the pre-Christian experience of the one who asks the question. There is no way of avoiding this necessity."[60] At the same time, Newbigin notes, "the introduction of the name of Jesus places the structure under a strain that it cannot bear without breaking."[61] The theological translation of Christian themes through the existing religious idioms breaks free of the existing religious mold, giving a unique Christian imagination. In other words, the Christian theology, when translated (both linguistically and theologically) to the local settings, maintains a particular element of continuity *and* discontinuity with the existing religious idioms and ideologies. From its inception till now, Christianity in India continues such theological negotiation on individual and denominational levels with other religions around them, irrespective of one's soft or hard-bounded theology of religion.

Holistic Christianity in the Context of Multidimensional Poverty and Social Inequalities:

Multidimensional poverty is measured based on household surveys' comprehensive health, education, and living deprivation data. Although considerable progress has been made in reducing multidimensional poverty (from 2015 to 2021), there is still work to be done, as India ranks 131 with 27.9% of the population in multidimensional poverty. [62]

Within this context of multidimensional poverty, Indian Christianity attempts to embody a theology of holism, communicating the "transformative power of the gospel over every aspect of life."[63] Even among the Indian evangelicals and protestants heavily influenced by their American counterparts, there is a common consensus that, as Aminta Arrington notes, "that neither evangelism nor social action can stand on its own; they are integrally related in mission."[64] Although the delivery of such a holistic/integral Gospel appears differently based on the resources presented to the local congregation, there is a consensus across denominational boundaries as to the need for integral mission (evangelism and social action). Nonetheless, in some circles of Indian Christianity, such an emphasis on holism does not negate the existence of the evangelical tendency to "prioritize the 'spiritual' ministry of the church over social engagement."[65] Therefore, the debate continues regarding the importance of an integral mission.

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[59] Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 20.

[60] Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 20.

[61] Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 20

[62] For details of the Multidimensional report in India, see https://www.undp.org/india/publications/national-multidimensional-poverty-index-progress-review-2023 (Last accessed on November 24, 2023).

[63] Aminta Arrington, "American Evangelicalism, Social Action, and Christianity in India" in Rebecca Shah and Joel A. Carpenter. *Christianity in India: Conversion, Community Development, and Religious Freedom*. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2018) 119.

[64] Arrington, "American Evangelicalism, Social Action, and Christianity in India",118.

[65] Darren Duerksen, "What God Has Joined Together Let No One Separate: Local Church and Development Agencies in God's Mission" in Rebecca Shah and Joel A. Carpenter. *Christianity in India: Conversion, Community Development, and Religious Freedom*. (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2018) 130.

However, considering the context of Indian multidimensional poverty, Christians have partnered with other Christian Developmental Organizations (CDOs) or have formed various local organizations to alleviate poverty and develop social sectors. Roger Hedlund lists Indian organizations such as The Inheritors in Nagpur, Maharashtra Village Ministries, Emmanuel Ministries, Kolkata, Gospel Echoing Missionary Society (GEMS), and Din Bandhu (Friend of the Poor) that focus on holistic mission as examples of "creative ministries of new Christian movements" in India.[66] In most instances, these developmental organizations and ministries work closely with local churches to bring change to people. The theological vision that unites the partnering work of local development organizations with local churches has been that of being "co-agents of missional transformation."[67] Although at times the relationship may not have been smooth, Duerksen equates notes the partnership to be "uneasy but divine marriage" where the close collaboration between the two creates some adaptive challenges,[68] yet when churches partner with CDOs; "when churches allow the development ideas and concerns brought by a CDO to permeate, mix and help shape their sense of mission; when the CDO values and honors the church's primacy as mission agent in that place…it is probable that the calling of the Christian development organization will contribute to God's mission in ways not otherwise possible."[69] Such is the social and missiological shaping of contemporary Indian Christianity that looks to provide a holistic transformation in individuals and communities in the context of multidimensional poverty.

Theologically, the context of poverty, along with various inequalities, namely the prevalence of systemic inequality against the lower castes (due to the existing social imaginary of caste consciousness), has also generated various contextual theologies. In this line of thinking, the Latin American Liberation Theology finds its place among Indian Christianity, predominantly in the Indian mainline denominations in the form of Dalit theology. The objective of Dalit theology was to communicate two complementary tasks. They are, as Sathianthan Clarke notes, "the resistance of *Dalits* to counter the reach of dominant theologies, and creative construction to circulate themes of *Dalits'* experience of the Divine One."[70] The resistance of inter-religious theologies that solely used Brahminical texts, along with the resonance of *Dalit* lived experiences in the suffering Christ, provided a framework for the liberation of *Dalits*. Hence, *Dalit* theology came to be known as "a contextual rendition of Indian liberation theology."[71] While such theologizing continues to exist in certain quarters of Indian Christianity, without an overt liberation theology, the Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal movement also began to get traction among Dalits, especially among slum dwellers in urban cities[72] and in the tribal areas of Northern India.[73] Unlike liberation theology, which sidestepped the spiritual side in its purist form of socio-political challenge, in Pentecostalism, Dalits found holistic hope, which promises spiritual and socio-economic liberation. In other words, through the Pentecostal emphasis on the manifestation and intervention of the Holy Spirit,

[66] Roger E. Hedlund, *Christianity Made in India: From Apostle Thomas to Mother Teresa*. (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2017) 145–162.

[67] Duerksen, "What God Has Joined Together Let No One Separate," 146.

[68] Duerksen, "What God Has Joined Together Let No One Separate," 146.

[69] Duerksen, "What God Has Joined Together Let No One Separate," 147.

[70] Sathianathan Clarke, "Dalit Theology." in Virginia Fabella and R. S. Sugirtharajah (Eds), The SCM dictionary of third world theologies" (London: SCM Press, 2003) 64.

[71] Clarke, "Dalit Theology," 64.

[72] Rebecca Samuel Shah, and Timothy Samuel Shah, "Pentecost Amid Pujas: Charismatic Christianity and Dalit women in Twenty-First-Century India" in *Global Pentecostalism in the 21st century*. Edited by Robert W. Hefner, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013) 194-222.

[73] Sahoo, *Pentecostalism and Politics of Conversion in India*.

the Dalits who are poor can receive, as Simon Chan notes, "spiritual liberation from fear and fatalism created by centuries of internalizing the law of karma; freedom from the fear of spirits; deliverance from demonic oppression, real or perceived; healing from their sickness, and so on."[74] In its theological emphasis on the Holy Spirit, Pentecostalism provides a much-needed avenue for the Dalits and people experiencing poverty to first experience spiritual liberation, which is imperative for any socio-political liberation.

At the same time, in certain quarters of Indian Christianity, Pentecostalism has also fallen prey to propagating the wider structural caste-based biases into their churches, which has led some to form exclusively Dalit Pentecostal churches.[75] Such Pentecostal structural mannerisms also stand under the critique of Dalit theological resistance in countering teachings and practices that propagate structural hierarchies.

Resilient Christianity in the Context of Persecution:

The religiously plural setting of India, where the nation's cultural and social aspects are closely knitted with religion, "religious change or conversion from one religion to another has been a contentious issue."[76] As Christians are a minority, any mission activities and preaching that invite other religious adherents to become new Christians are offensive and, in some cases, are punishable under the law.

Although the Indian constitution does not provide preference to Hinduism as the state religion, the radical Hindutva movements have been on the rise, especially during the rule of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at the central government. The standard charge against the Christians and Muslims is that "these minority religious traditions are foreign and alien to the Majority Hindu culture of India."[77] While the government of India continues to publicly state that it upholds constitutional secularism and the right for all religious adherents to practice their religion fearlessly, Hindu radical groups such as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Sang Parivar, and Bajrang Dal continue to grow and instigate violence against Christians and Muslims in the grassroots. At the same time, under the disguise of upholding the right of the low caste people to practice their religion without falling to the material allure of Christian missionaries, various Indian states have instituted the 'freedom of religion bill.' This relatively new law, which is also popularly known as the 'anti-conversion bill,' was intentionally tailored to curb anyone from converting to Christianity or Islam. In addition, the Christian Community Developmental Organizations (CDO) are also finding it hard to implement developmental projects due to the accusation of conversion. Compassion International is one of the examples, as they were forced to leave the country in 2017 after 48 years of its operation on charges that the Child sponsorship funds are being used towards conversion.[78]

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[74] Simon Chan, *Grassroots Asian Theology: Thinking the Faith From the Ground Up*. (Illinois: IVP Academic, 2014), 103.

[75] V. V. Thomas, *Dalit Pentecostalism: Spirituality of the Empowered Poor*. (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2008).

[76] Pachuau, *World Christianity*, 86.

[77] Peter C. Phan and Jonathan Y. Tan. "Interreligious Majority-Minority Dynamics" in David Cheetham, Douglas Pratt, and David Thomas (eds). *Understanding Interreligious Relations*. (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2013), 222.

[78] "Christian charity set to withdraw from India after funding blocked," *The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/03/christian-charity-set-to-withdraw-from-india-after-funding-blocked, accessed on November 24, 2023.

In response to these threats of persecution, Christians in India have been resilient and have attempted to uphold their minority religious rights according to the country's constitutional liberties. Although the stringent religious freedom laws limit visible Christian engagements in some Indian states, the discussion around democracy and the constitutional rights of religious minorities comes to the forefront when attacks against Christians occur. Often in India, violence against minority religious adherents reinforces the need to find new ways to nurture a substantive democracy that enables religious freedom (for both the majority and minority). In advocating for religious freedom, Indian Christians are not only promoting the freedom to practice religion, but also to relate with other religions and their comprehensive doctrines."[79]

Theologically, persecutions also lead to reflecting upon how Christians should position themselves in instances of future attacks. On one end, in their struggle against the culture of violence, Christians should, as S. Wesley Ariarajah notes, look "beyond all religious boundaries" to embrace teachings and practical guidelines from other religious traditions and collaborate with others who are committed to overcoming the culture of violence through peace and nonviolence.[80] However, on the other end, Indian Christians in some sense are expected to face more persecution, reminding themselves that "both conflict and suffering have always accompanied faith gospel witness."[81]

Ecumenically, the rise of religious persecution has also led to some contestation within Indian Christianity. Often, the protestants and Catholics have blamed the Pentecostals (who embrace persecution as part of Gospel witness) for their missionary approach of demonizing other religious beliefs and being "more assertive, more critical, and more visible in their evangelism" as an unnecessary provocation that is inviting persecution from other religious adherents.[82] Elizabeth Koepping observes this phenomenon, especially among "certain Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches" who, as Koepping notes, "tend to promote the view that only Jesus saves in a very strident, even aggressive, manner. Moreover, they not only preach that no other religion is efficacious, but that all other religions are of the devil… Needless to say, loud antagonistic attitudes worsen the often already difficult life of long-established Christians."[83]

Despite these diversities of approach in the context of persecution, Indian Christianity strives through the challenges. Through forming new collaborations with other religious communities or fearlessly engaging in missional activities, the resilient nature of Indian Christianity permeates in their fearless outlook amid persecution.

CONCLUSION

The story of Indian Christianity is a testament to a faith that has been transitioning for the last two thousand years, as it has encountered multiple Christian traditions over two thousand years through various transcontinental and transregional links. While Christianity emerged in the early arrival of Christianity in the first century from Syria, it gave rise to an assimilated nature of South Indian

[79] Gnana Patrick, *Public Theology: Indian Concerns, Perspectives, and Themes*. (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2020) 100.

[80] Ariarajah, *Strangers or Co-pilgrims?*, 239.

[81] Vinoth Ramachandra, *Faiths in Conflict?: Christian Integrity in a Multicultural World*. (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1999) 167

[82] Chad M. Bauman, *Pentecostals, Proselytization, and Anti-Christian Violence in Contemporary India*. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 76.

[83] Elizabeth Koepping, "India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Burma/Myanmar" in Peter C. Phan (ed). *Christianities in Asia*. (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 26-27.

Christianity with the Syrian tradition. Eventually, when the Portuguese arrived in the fifteenth century with their Catholic Christianity (along with their political and militaristic agenda), we see the Christianity in India going through the transitional modes of conquest, transregional migration, and resistance. However, as Portuguese rule waned with the rise of British presence, we also saw Christianity going through accommodation, Bible translation, and vernacularization, leading to the Christian face of social reform efforts. The era of translation opened a phase in Indian Christianity where the vernacular Bible became the authority in indigenizing the faith, giving rise to revivals that ushered Pentecostalism in India. This era also witnessed the various indigenization efforts of protestants and Catholics, which continue to occur in different parts of India.

The history of Indian Christianity is not only the story of how foreigners have imparted their faith tradition to Indians (through their transcontinental links) but is also about how such traditions were received locally through assimilation, migration, resistance, vernacularization, revival, and indigenization. Through it all, today, in the context of a Hindu majority India, Indian Christianity stands as a polyvalent religion, where numerous forms of Christianity assembled under major Christian traditions—Catholic, Orthodox, Protestants, and Pentecostals & Independents, claiming to be truly South Indian and Christian. Even amid a polyvalent nature that embodies diversity, Indian Christianity collectively embodies some distinctive features. First, Monopolizing the fact that Christianity is a minority religion, the faith takes on a unique inter-religious nature of Indian through the notion of permeability. Second, within the context of multidimensional poverty and inequality, the face of Indian Christianity, irrespective of its various denominational diversity, embodies holistic mission as the right praxis of Christian faith. Finally, with the rise of the Hindutva uprising, Christianity as a minority religion is also under attack. However, the resilient nature of Christians in India is a living testament of Christ’s hope for the World.