

THE POLITICS OF RELIGION AND THE COMPLEX SPIRITUALITY OF RELIGIOUS ENCOUNTERS AND CO – REALIZATIONS: THE MULTIVERSE OF HINDU ENGAGEMENT WITH CHRISTIANITY IN INDIA²

Abstract

The paper discusses the complexity of spiritual quest and border-crossing dialogues in India. It discusses the multiverse of engagement between Hindus and Christians and the plural streams of co-walking, contradictions and confrontations. It discusses the complex histories of encounters between Hindus and Christians. It discusses the inter-religious dialogues undertaken by religious leaders, reformers and common people from both the traditions.

Keywords: Hindu-Christian Engagement, Politics of religion and complexity of spirituality quest, inter-religious dialogues

To be a good Hindu also meant that I would be a good Christian. There was no need for me to join your crowd to be a believer in the beauty of the teaching of Jesus or try to follow his example.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

But how many churches are willing to worship Krishna or Siva as the same universal God described in the Bible? [...] Jewish and Christian religions cannot afford to compromise on their history-centric beliefs, because to do so would be tantamount to surrendering their claim of unique access to knowledge of God's will.

--Rajiv Malhotra (2011), *Being Different: An Indian Challenge to Western Universalism*, pp. 23-93

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The Christian of the future will be a mystic, or else no Christian at all.
--Karl Rahner (1973), "The Spirituality of the Church of the Future," p. 149.

The Upanishads open to the Christian world the farther horizons of something of the mystery of the Divine. If one's mind is open to the mystical quest of the Upanishads one cannot be fixated on the particular form of God's revelation, nor can one be dogmatic about the concrete formulations in theology. [...] In this unending spiritual pursuit the Christian theologian meets the Hindu Vedantin; the interpretation of the spiritual dynamics of the New Testament is deepened by the mystical insights of the Upanishads. The anthropocentric worldview of Christianity is balanced by the cosmic world-view of the Upanishadic sages; the emphasis on rituals is harmonized with the pursuit of contemplation; the social initiatives get integrated with ecological concerns. [...]

A similar encounter and deepening process takes place in the Hindu encounter with Christian faith. There are prophetic streams in Hindu scriptures and socio-critical initiatives in Hindu traditions. But under the weight of Brahmin domination and caste structure these have not been sufficiently articulated in the process of social transformation. The concerns of equanimity (*samadar-sana*), solidarity (*yajna*), integral welfare (*kshemam*), justice (*dharma*), and good for all (*sarvabhutahiteratah*) have often been neglected or even suppressed. The prophetic literature of the Bible and the liberative message of Jesus could help Hindus discover this social transformative potential of God-experience.

--Sebastian Painadath (2007), *We are Co-Pilgrims*, pp. 74-75

The term 'Christian' is more of an adjective than a noun. The term [...] is a property of something else, a concept that implies 'diminishment'—which is indicative of positional subordination. [...] there was never such a thing, nor is there any such thing as a purely 'Indian' Christian, any basic or generic sense. Only more earth-bound, 'hybrid,' or 'hyphenated' forms of Christians can be implied within historical understandings. Such Christians were, and are, pinned to the earth by their local culture and languages—and most of all, by their birth (*jati*), or caste.

--Robert Eric Frynkenberg (2010), *Christianity in India: From Beginnings to the Present*, p. 458.

Introduction and Invitation:

The Politics of Religion and the Complex Spirituality of Religious Encounters and Co-Realizations

The relation between politics and religion is a complex one in any society as it is the relationship between religion and power, religion and spiritual quest, and spirituality and power. While religion is much more entangled with a politics of domination and control, spiritual quest, along with its equally complex entanglement in politics, is a much more open-ended journey of self-realization, co-realization and struggle for beauty, dignity and dialogues in self, culture, society and the world. The politics of inter-religious encounters is different from spiritual encounters of religions as the later is much more open-ended and is accompanied by complex processes of co-learning, co-realizations and confrontations. In Indian histories and contemporary societies, we see this complex process at work. In my paper, I discuss this with regard to the multiverse of Hindu Christian engagement in India.

Hinduism and Christianity have been in interaction for a long time. According to some, Jesus and his spiritual journey which later took an institutional form in Christianity was deeply influenced by devotional streams in Vaishnavism and spiritual quest in Buddhism prevalent in India and Asia. Jesus himself is said to have come to India and Tibet during the missing years of his life in Palestine and learnt the art of yoga and spiritual quest (see Yogananda 2007).¹ Many fellow seekers and fellow pilgrims such as Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Yogananda Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda have realized in Jesus a yogi, a spiritual master and an embodiment of Divinity and have found great affinity between inclusive streams of yoga in India and Asia and the spiritual quest of Jesus. On a related historical note, since the time of the Apostles, Christianity has been with India. St Thomas is said to have come to India, preach among the people and was tragically murdered. But since then his followers and their community have been part of Indian social and religious life. Then with the Portugese colonial conquest of Goa, it opened up new limits and possibilities of evangelism, colonialism and cross-cultural denigration, confrontation and mutual challenge.

Complex Histories of Co-Walking from the Hindu Shores

With the Portugese colonial conquest of Goa, Western Christianity got a new lease of life in India. Robert de Nobili (1577-1656) came to India after this as part of Jesuit missionary activities. He accepted indigenous mode of dressing and behaved as a Hindu sannyasi. But, as Amaladoss tells us, "He adopted local customs in order to win over the people of his day and to communicate his message, and not necessarily because he appreciated these customs" (Amaladoss &

Clooney 2005: 33).

When we come to the modern period, we see the deep significance of encounter with Christianity in the reforms of Hinduism and formation of challenging streams such as Brahma Samaj. But even before this, encounter with Christianity had influenced Bhakti movements in India and varieties of critical spirituality which had challenged caste and feudal domination. As Gail Omvedt writes: "[...] While it may appear unrealistic to argue that Kabir's 'sai' was actually 'Isa' (Jesus) and make him into a kind of crypto-Christian, it remains quite possible that among the later poets using the name 'Kabir' one was indeed influenced by Christian ideas. After the sixteenth century, specifically after 1545 when Jesuits began to spread through north and south India, a wide compact of ideas can be seen. In Maharastra, a *Krista Purana* was reported as composed in 1626, as one of the earliest Konkani / Marathi writings, written by Fr. Thomas Stephen (1549-1619), an English Jesuit [...] (2008: 65).

Rammohan Roy (1772-1833), considered by many as the father of modern Bengal-Indian Renaissance, was influenced by the ethical precepts of Jesus. As Romain Rolland writes: "Roy extracted from Christianity its ethical system, but rejected the divinity of Christ, just as he rejected the Hindu incarnations" (Rolland 1954: 103). He was also influenced by Islam, its lack of idolatry and monotheism. In fact, his first book was on Islam entitled *Tuhfat-ul-Muwathiddin* (A Present to the Believers in One God; a treatise in Persian with a preface in Arabic language). Roy's encounter with Christianity made him realize the ethical significance of religion and with this he wanted to fight against cruel practices in Hinduism such as *Sati*. His interpretation of Christianity was challenged by evangelical and doctrinaire Christians of the time such as Marshman who insisted on the significance of baptism and dogma. But in this insistence, Christianity lost a chance to creatively engage itself with the ethical and wider challenges of society beyond doctrinaire assertion and dogma. Unfortunately the situation is not much different now even after two hundred years.²

Keshab Candra Sen (1838-1884), Roy's successor in Brahma Samaj, continued the creative dialogue with both Hinduism and Christianity but he sought to bring devotion to Roy's rationalism.³ If Roy had missed dialogue with indigenous devotional stream of Bengal and India such as the great Chaitanya movement which had transformed the religious situation in medieval India, making it anti-caste and open to dialogue with Islam, Keshab brought the Chaitanya stream to Brahma Samaj thus widening the social base of Brahma Samaj.⁴ In this, he would have been definitely influenced by his meeting with Sri Ramakrishna though some also think that Keshab also influenced Ramakrishna.⁵ Keshab introduced a new form of worship in the mother language (cf. Mukherjee 1992). Keshab wrote creatively in both Bengali and English and he contributed to a new style in Bengali prose which would have brought him closer in his communication and interaction with ordinary people of Bengal.⁶

In his engagement with Christianity, Keshab offered his own concept and realization of Oriental Christ: "Behold! He cometh to us in his long flowing garment, his dress and feature altogether Oriental" (in Thomas 1970: 70). Keshab also focused on the need to develop indigenous Christianity and develop a national church which is Christ-centered, rather than narrowly church-centered. What Thomas had written more than forty years ago on Keshab's vision is still a challenge before Christianity in India, Asia and the world:

[...] the idea of a Christ-centered integration of the Indian and Western religious and cultural heritages, expressing itself in an indigenous Christianity, is highly relevant to the future of the Christian church in India. In fact, the Church of South India has written into its constitution that it stands for a Church expressing the universality of Christ in indigenous thought-patterns and life-forms of the Indian people. In view of the rapid changes taking place in these thought-patterns and life-forms, it is necessary to say that the church must become indigenous not to an India that is past, but to contemporary India in which the religious and cultural traditions of its hoary past are themselves seeking reintegration within the context of the new humanism relevant to the developing secular, pluralistic and open society.⁷

P.C. Mazoomdar (1840-1905), Keshab's successor in Brahma Samaj also followed his theme of Oriental Christ. For Mazoomdar, if "the light of Oriental Christ and mystic devotion is allowed to fall upon the "ecclesiastical figure of the Sweet Prophet of Nazareth, that figure will be 'illuminated with strange and unknown radiance" (quoted in Thomas 1970: 83). Along with his realization of Oriental Christ, Mazoomdar also laid emphasis on the significance of Holy Spirit in life and the world. His emphasis on Spirit also brings us to a similar emphasis by Bede Griffiths⁸ from the other side of the shore though, for Thomas, Mazoomdar reduces "the Trinity to a Spirit-monism" (1970: 99).

In the multiverse of Hindu engagement with Christianity in 19th century Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886) and Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) have been deeply influential. Sri Ramakrishna's realization of Jesus and Madonna was a spiritual realization going beyond dogma and outward paraphernalia. Once Ramakrishna saw a picture of Madonna in one Jadu Mallick's country house and he was immediately moved by it. After this he also realized the presence of Jesus.⁹ Ramakrishna was also deeply moved by the Biblical story of Peter walking on water: "A picture of this scene was later hung on the wall of his quarters in the temple; it was the only image that was borrowed from the Christian tradition" (Schouten 2012: 87).

Swami Vivekananda "was formed by the mystical experience of his

teacher" (ibid: 82). For him, "The best commentary on the life of [Jesus] is his own life. "The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no where to lay his head.' That is what Christ says as the only way to salvation; he lays down no other way." He writes about Jesus: "He had no other occupation in life, no other thought except that one, that he was a spirit. [...] And not only so, but he, with his marvelous vision, had found that every man and woman, whether Jew or Gentile, whether rich or poor, whether saint or sinner, was the embodiment of the same undying spirit as himself. Therefore, the one work his whole life showed was to call upon them to realize their own spiritual nature. [...] You are all Sons of God, immortal Spirit. 'Know,' he declared, 'the Kingdom of Heaven is within you.' 'I and my Father are one.' Dare you stand up and say, not only that 'I am the Son of God,' but I shall also find in my heart of hearts that I and my Father are one?" (2011: 21).

Swami Vivekananda realizes Jesus as a Son of the Orient and Christianity as a religion from Asia and the Orient.¹⁰ Like many from India, he is not bothered about the historicity¹¹ of Jesus but realizes Him as God: "If I, as an Oriental, have to worship Jesus of Nazareth, there is only one way left to me, that is, to worship him as God and nothing else" (ibid: 23).

Unlike Rammohan Roy, Swami Vivekananda looks at Sermon on the Mount as not primarily ethical; he was not impressed by the "moral precepts of the Sermon on the Mount. [...] He once called the famous Golden Rule, with which the Sermon on the Mount ends, 'excessively vulgar' because of the orientation to the Self. For him, the heart of all religion was to transcend the orientation to the self and to achieve unity with the godhead. One text in the Sermon on the Mount stood out, in his view, i.e., 'Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God' (Mathew 5:8)." (Schouten 2012: 98). But from this it is not helpful to make a contrast between ethical Christ and mystical Christ in Swami Vivekananda.¹² Swami Vivekananda was deeply influenced by the ethical and practical work of Jesus as his mystical and spiritual work. He was concerned with ethical aspects of religion and society and in their transformation through what he called practical Vedanta. As Thomas aptly puts it: "[...] it is possible to look at Vivekananda's religion as an attempt to synthesize Advaita Vedanta with Christian philanthropy [...]" (1970: 246). But Vivekananda's practical Vedanta was not just philanthropy; it was also an engagement in practical mysticism as it was with Sri Ramakrishna. In fact, Sri Ramakrishna brought the challenge of transformation of suffering as the central challenge before any religion, and especially Hinduism, and it is said that he once kicked Swami Vivekananda in his mouth to make him realize that he should not just hanker after his own salvation, rather work for the amelioration of suffering such as poverty and transformation of the world.¹³

It is the realization of Jesus which had played a key role in the formation of Sri Ramakrishna Mission. Swami Vivekananda founded the order telling to his fellow walkers the story of Jesus Christ.¹⁴ Seekers in Sri Ramakrishna-Vive-

kananda stream have continued to undertake their own journey of Jesus realization and formally Christmas is a holiday in Sri Ramakrishna mission—a tradition started by Swami Brahmananda who succeeded Swami Vivekananda. This has inspired some Hindus such as Vengal Chakkarai who was a prominent Christian nationalist and theologian to embrace Christianity.¹⁵ Of many monks from Sri Ramakrishna Mission who have written about Christ such as Swami Akhilananda who wrote *Hindu View of Christ*, Swami Ranganathananda's *Christ We Adore* calls for our own co-walking realization of Jesus. Like Swami Vivekananda, for Swami Ranganathananda, "The Kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17: 21) has "extraordinary significance for Hindus" (Schouten 2012: 100). As Schouten tells us: "Ranganathananda also interprets 'within you' as 'in your inner self': the Kingdom of God can be experienced in the inner life. Purenness in heart is a precondition for sharing in this kingdom. But whoever fulfils this condition can realize unity with God and thus see God" (ibid: 100).¹⁶ Thus encounter with Christianity in Ramakrishna-Vivekananda stream was a decisive step in the shaping of modern Hinduism which also led to much deeper and wider turns and cross-currents of reconstruction, creativity and confrontations (confronting one's tradition as Swami Vivekananda had done) compared to what had happened during the days of Brahma Samaj.¹⁷

Yogananda Paramahansa (1893-1952), the spiritual seeker from India who has inspired millions across the world also realizes Jesus as a yogi and a spiritual teacher.¹⁸ Philosopher S. Radhakrishna (1888-1975) realizes Jesus in terms of sacrifice of ego.¹⁹ This also finds a resonance in the Christian theological interpretation of Christ and Trinity which also realizes the significance of sacrifice (cf. Anand 2004). For instance, Drawing inspiration from Vedic notion of Purusa as Jagnya, Subhash Anand develops a notion of Trinity and God as Self-giving: "[...] the Father is the Father because He gives himself totally to the Son; the Son is the Son because He gives himself totally to the Father; and the Spirit is precisely this [...] mutual self-giving [...]" (2004: 45). He presents similar views of Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar:

Father's self-utterance in the generation of the Son is an initial 'kenosis' within the Godhead that underpins all subsequent kenosis. For the Father strips himself, without remainder, of his Godhead and hands it over to the Son [...] Inherent in Father's love is an absolute renunciation: he will not be God for himself alone. He lets go of his divinity (ibid: 46).

The theme of sacrifice brings us to Gandhi's (1869-1948) realization of Jesus, engagement with and challenge to Christianity. Gandhi realized Jesus as a *Satyagrahi* and in his engagement with and challenge to Christianity realized cross in societies and histories. Many Christians realized Gandhi's non-coopera-

tion movement and freedom struggles as bearing cross²⁰ for liberation while others sided with the imperialist and colonialist forces. S.K. George was one such Christian who was inspired by Gandhi's non-cooperation movement of 1919-21 and took part in it which "made real to his youthful mind the idealism and passion of Jesus of Nazareth" (Thomas 1970: 219). "And in the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-32 he felt his Christian duty 'to appeal to all Indian Christians to join in and act as custodians of non-violence" (ibid). "But for this he not only lost his job in the theological college in Calcutta where he was teaching but his affiliation with church." But he was not deterred by this and lived his life for realization of satyagraha and an "undogmatic Christianity" (ibid).²¹

George took part in India's freedom struggle but he was not alone. Many Christians took part in India's freedom struggle.²² In his book, *Gandhi's Challenge to Christianity*, George tells about Gandhi as a spiritual fact²³ having demonstrated "how the Sermon on the Mount can be practical politics" (1939: 25). In his foreword to this book, Radhakrishna also writes: "Whatever the Continental theologian may say, it is impossible for the Indian Christian to resist the impression that God has been present in the age-long struggle of man for light. The fact of Gandhi is a challenge to the exclusive claims of Christianity" (ibid: 9).²⁴

In his engagement with Christianity, Gandhi was deeply influenced by Sermon on the Mount²⁵ and he found similarity between the Sermon and the Gita. Gandhi was also influenced by Tolstoy's understanding of Christianity.²⁶ In his journey of life Gandhi felt "great leaning to Christianity and for a time wavered between Christianity and Hinduism. But in the end, he 'saw no reason for changing his religion'" (Thomas 1970: 210).

Gandhi was opposed to conversion to Christianity using gullible means. His first priority was reform of one's religion. Gandhi's critique of conversion raised issues of responsibility to reform one's religion of birth but his was not a closed approach to one's own religion as he himself was wavering between Hinduism and Christianity seriously considering to convert to the later at one time.²⁷ But Bishop Azariah, the Bishop of Dronakal, challenged Gandhi's view on conversion by arguing that conversion is not only led by foreign missionaries but also by people like himself who had grown up from the soil of suffering and was working with them for their amelioration and transformation.²⁸ But Gandhi's opposition to conversion is not an instance of what Omvedt (2008) calls his "soft Hindutva." She is here swayed away by her own judgmental enthusiasm and seems not to try to understand Gandhi's own position as well as his border-crossing realizations. As the above paragraph says, Gandhi was not relating to Christians only as a Hindu, he was seeking to realize himself as simultaneously Hindu, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist and many more.²⁹

In tune with many spiritual seekers from Hinduism and India whom we have discussed in the previous pages, Deepak Chopra (2008: 9) presents us his realization of a Third Jesus "who taught his followers how to reach the God-con-

sciousness.” For Chopra, “The first Jesus was a rabbi who wandered the shores of Northern Galilee many centuries ago” (2008: 8). The second Jesus is a product of theological construction what Rajeev Malhotra (2007) calls the Nicean creed: “Millions of people worship another Jesus, however, who never existed, who does not even lay claim to the fleeting substance of the first Jesus. This is the Jesus built up over thousands of years by theologians and other scholars. He is the Holy Ghost, the Three-in-One Christ, the source of sacraments and prayers that were unknown to the rabbi Jesus when he walked the earth” (ibid: 9). Chopra further writes: “The idea of the Second Coming has been especially destructive to Jesus’ intentions, because it postpones what needs to happen now. The Third coming—finding God-consciousness through your own efforts—happens in the present” (ibid: 10).

To this multiverse of Hindu engagement with Christianity, we can invite realizations of Chitta Ranjan Das (1923-2011), a creative thinker from Odisha. In his “Jesus Christ, White, Black or Yellow?” Das tells us: “[.] whatever might be said about the Jesus in history, Jesus has come to be one of the very important inspiration in mankind’s history and continues to be that inspiration even today” (2012: 27). Like many of his fellow seekers, Das urges us to go beyond a merely historicist understanding of Jesus and here urges us to realize the mystical quest of Meister Eckhart: “For Eckhart, Jesus was not born only once at one particular point of history. He is being born every moment of our life and world’s life. [.] Jesus ceases to be only a happening in history, he becomes a challenge instead [.]” (ibid; also see Mieth 2009). But to realize this we need to go beyond the theological construction of Jesus including the Papal condemnation of life of poverty of Jesus.³⁰

Hindu Christian Engagement: From the Shore of Christian Journey

As Hindus have realized Jesus and Christianity with their own initial starting points in a journey of unfolding realizations, so have Christians who have sought to understand not only Hinduism but also Jesus and Christianity with an immersion in some of the spiritual pathways of Hinduism. Here we can begin with the journey of Jesus himself. It is believed that Jesus himself came to India and Tibet during the missing years of his life in Palestine and learnt from the spiritual practices of these lands. Both the devotional stream of Krishna and the Vaishnavas and the spiritual seeking of Buddhism influenced Jesus.³¹ Down the ages Christians have been influenced by their participation in the cultural and spiritual journey of Hindus which unfortunately has also meant retaining or adapting one’s caste practice.

Like our previous section, here we can focus on a few exemplary voices their working with what Victoria Harrison (2011) calls “exemplary reasoning.”³² We come right to the modern period and begin with Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya

(1861-1907). Upadhyaya was a classmate of Swami Vivekananda. He accepted Christianity and was baptized. He also took part in the Swadeshi movement in Bengal and worked with revolutionaries such as Sri Aurobindo. But Upadhyaya did not renounce Hinduism, rather he continued to be a Hindu Catholic. Upadhyaya was the first to use the name *Satchidananda* for the "Christian idea of Trinity within Christian church" (Thomas 1970: 102). Upadhyaya used Vedanta to understand Christian theology but here used the Thomist framework, not the mystical framework of Swami Vivekananda. Upadhyaya established an Ashram and introduced worship of Sarasvati—the Goddess of Learning—in his Ashram. About his journey as a Catholic Hindu he wrote: "By birth we are Hindus and shall remain Hindu till death. But as *Dvija* [twice born] by virtue of our sacramental rebirth, we are Catholics" (quoted in Thomas 1970: 109).

Pandita Ramabai (1858-1922) is another exemplary seeker who refused easy categorization and denominational fixation. She was a great wanderer, a courageous rebel and a creative being. She was born in a Brahmin family and had travelled with her parents the nook and corner of this country on foot. Ramabai was a critic of patriarchal Hinduism. When she accepted baptism while Brahmin reformers such as Ranade criticized her, Jyotirao Phule welcomed it and supported her (cf. Kosambi 2000; Omvedt 2008). Ramabai established a woman's home for widow and destitute woman called *Mutkisadan* (abode of liberation) in Khedgaon near Pune. Here she taught women how to live independently learning different trades, skills and vocations of life. Ramabai learnt Hebrew and translated Bible into Marathi. This was more creative and communicative compared to earlier missionary translation which was heavily Sanskritic.³³

Ramabai lectured in the U.S. about the same time as Swami Vivekananda was lecturing. She told her audience about the plight of high caste Hindu women and came into confrontation with Swami Vivekananda about missing this aspect of Hinduism in his representation of Hinduism to the West. But with her self-critical interrogation of her own Brahminical tradition, she was not an uncritical convert to the other side as well. As Scouten writes: "While defending the Christian faith to Indian readers, she attempted to give English readers a better understanding of India's high civilization. [...] Like Rammohan Roy, she objected to the designation 'heathen' for a Hindu" (2012: 74).³⁴

Sadhu Sundar Singh (1889-1929) was a convert to Christianity from the Sikh path and like Ramabai was not comfortable with denominational fixation. He lived the life of a wondering monk moving in between India and Tibet and like Ramabai also travelled around the world (Andrews 1934). He was committed to an indigenous church in India: "The water of life has hitherto been offered by thirsting souls in a European vessel. Only when it is given in an Eastern bowl will it be accepted by simple men and women who seek the truth" (Andrews 1934: 86-87).

C.F. Andrews (1871-1940) came to India as an Anglican priest and soon

immersed himself with freedom struggle of India as well as in the struggle for dignity on the part of the indentured Indians in Fiji, South Africa and around the world. He taught at St. Stephens and Tagore's Santiniketan (see Chaturvedi and Sykes 1949).³⁵ Bede Griffiths and Swami Abishiktananda (original name Henri Le Saux) also realized the spiritual paths in Hinduism and made deep dialogues with Vedanta and other streams of seeking realizations. Henri Le Saux, later known as Swami Abishiktananda (1910-1973), a Benedictine priest from France, came to India in 1949. In 1950, together with Fr Monchanin, who had come a decade earlier, he founded an Ashram near Trichy named Shantivanam. He was deeply influenced by Ramana Maharshi and also lived in a cave in Thiruvannamalai for sometime. For Ramana, "the *guhantara*, the cave of the heart, the interior space of experience resolved all dualism, and it is this imagery that is the central symbol in Abhisiktananda's writing" (Visvanathan 2007: 163). About his experience of Advaita, Swami Abishiktananda writes: "The most terrifying experience for the Christian who experience Advaita is that the Lord himself goes away—it appears to tear him away from the Church and the sacraments which bind him to Christ" (quoted in Visvanathan 2007: 174).³⁶ He also writes:

The more I live in India, and the more I am in touch with Hindus, the more certain I am that only spiritual means will transmit the message of the Gospel. The church was poor and a pariah under the Roman Empire during the first three centuries, but she was victorious. Here, in four centuries with money, good works, protection and [colonial] power and a host of missionaries, we have barely scratched the surface of India (ibid: 181).³⁷

Bede Griffiths known as Swami Dayananda also had a deep appreciation for the spiritual life of India: "The first thing that I have learned is a simplicity of life which before I would have not thought possible. India has a way of reducing human needs to a minimum" (Griffiths 1976: 1; also see Griffiths 2003). He began with Kurusimala Ashram in Vagamon, Kerala and then moved to Shantivanam and breathed his last there.³⁸ Griffiths challenges us to realize the mystical dimension of Christianity and here he finds affinity between Sankara and Aquinas: "Sankara and Aquinas were both mystics who had experienced the reality of the world which transcends the senses and could bring their intelligence to bear on that" (ibid: 105). Griffiths finds yoga a spiritual way for the Christians as well findig similarity between the integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo and Christian yoga.³⁹

The creative border-crossing and spiritual quest of Abishiktananda and Griffiths find a resonance in many Christians from India. They both belonged to the Christian Ashram movement of India though not totally closed within a view of Ashram as an institution. For them, sannyasa was a field of convergence between Hinduism and Christianity.⁴⁰ It must be noted that there is a long tradition

of Ashram movement in India nurtured by such pioneering initiatives such as the Christa Prema Seva Ashram in Sivajinagar, Maharashtra, founded in 1927 by Anglican John "Jack" Winslow.⁴¹ In this field, along with Santivanam, Karisumala Ashram in Kerala is another whose founder Fr. Francis Acharya (originally known as Fr. Francis Mahieu, a Cistercian monk from Belgium) had stayed in Shantivanm in his early days as he had also drawn inspiration from Gandhi, especially Gandhi's concept of bread labor.⁴² Samkeeksha Center for Indian Spirituality based in Kalady, the birth place of Shankar, is another which works with inter-religious dialogue. It also pleads for creative border-crossing between Hinduism and Christianity. Sebastian Painadath from Sameeksha, as in one of the opening paragraphs of this essay, urges us to realize how Christians and Hindus can simultaneously realize the prophetic and mystical dimension in their social, religious and spiritual lives. Realizing the mystical dimension would help Christianity go beyond its exclusivism and realizing the prophetic dimension would help Hinduism to go beyond oppressive structures of many kinds such as caste system and realize self and social liberation.

Michael Amaladoss and Subhash Anand also bring deep realization to this journey of Hindu-Christian mutual co-realization. In his essay, "From syncretism to Harmony," Michael Amaladoss tells us about his own journey as a Hindu Christian:

We can think of another standpoint from within. For me, an Indian Christian, Hinduism is not an 'other' religion, as it is a foreign missionary. It is the religion of my ancestors. God has spoken to my ancestors through it. It is part of my tradition. I have my roots in it. I could say that I have two roots: Hinduism and Christianity. I will not find myself till I can discover and integrate the riches and human creativity—both these traditions have given to me. I am not anymore looking at Hindu scriptures, symbols and rituals from the outside as 'other,' but from within as 'mine.' Obviously I cannot have my feet in two boats at the same time. I will have to find a personal integration. Being a Christian, my integration of other religious elements will be around my experience of Jesus. I do not have to reject the Christian historical tradition but I will have to see that the Christian and Hindu traditions interact within me and my community in a creative manner. I will then be not only an 'Indian Christian,' but a 'Hindu-Christian,' my main identity being Christian. What I say here about Hinduism in my own personal case can be applied by others to Buddhism, Islam, Tribal, Dalits or other religions depending upon where their roots are (2008: 145).

Subhash Anand also embodies inspiring openness in his participation with some of the rivers of Hinduism. He applies the Upanishadic principle of Bandhu which means friendship to realize a more creative inter-relationship between Hindus and Christians theologically and practically. He tells us that when he is in a chapel he realizes Natraj as the Lord of Dance and also Christ as Dance.⁴³ He presents Natraja as a holistic Christian icon: "Indeed, Jesus is the Dance of God, nay he is also the Lord of Dance" (2004: 167). Anand urges us to realize that Siva is not only male but also female, Siva is a womb which can also challenge us to realize Jesus as a mother, as a womb.⁴⁴

Franics X Clooney (2010) has explored some of the similarities between feminine spirituality in Hinduism and Christianity as part of a project of cross-cultural theology. But Clooney shares with us with inspiring honesty the difficulty of radically crossing one's identity as a Christian which, a journey we find in Griffiths and Abhishiktananda. Similarly, Felix Wilfred also challenges Christian theology and practice for more radical opening to Hinduism. Wilfred pleads for a Christian relativism as part of going beyond exclusive claims to truth. He also urges Christian institutions to go beyond their closed organizational logic and be part of wider democratic civil society of accountability, transparency and equal participation (Wilfred 2000). Wilfred challenges for a radical border-crossing in his *Margins: Site of Asian Theologies*:

Reading the New Testament will reveal how it has all the things necessary for salvation. But I have been struck by the lack of one thing in the New Testament: the humour. Though the gospels are meant to convey joy and peace, yet humour does not seem to have a due place. A reading of the divine intervention in human history as through the avatar of Sri Krishna would bring in the element of play, both in God and also in human life. This play, in reality, is not expression of any frivolity. Through the play (*lila*) of Krishna is expressed the *unbound freedom of God and God's creation*. In fact creation is viewed as the play of God. What is happening at the microcosmic level with the play of Krishna is in fact the mirror of the macrocosmic reality of infinite freedom. [...] The magnetic pull of the milkmaids towards Krishna playing flute is nothing but the irresistible way the Divine power draws everything to itself. In Christian tradition we speak of the way the cross as the power of God's mystery draws us all [...] In short, a reading of the New Testament symbolism of the cross through the story of Krishna playing flute could be very enriching for both the traditions. A cross-scriptural reading of the New Testament message of the cross with the play and aesthetics (*rasa*) involved in

the play of flute by Krishna could save us also from the possible danger of masochistic trends (2008: 182).⁴⁵

Interrogating Available Tropes of Hindu-Christian Engagement: Dalits and Adivasis

Hindus are not homogeneous. Scheduled castes who are now called Dalits constitute a major part of Hindu society. Dalits oppose Brahminical Hinduism and they as well as Dalit Christians in particular interrogate the terms such as Hindu Christians or Catholic Christians. For them this is the language and realization offered by what Frynkenberg (2010) calls “trophies of grace,” the high caste Hindu converts to Christianity who were preoccupied with mystical and other philosophical issues such as the significance of Vedanta in interpreting Christian Trinity.⁴⁶ They did not experience the pangs of social discrimination and their individual conversion did not alter the group humiliation of Dalits. Dalit Christians have interrogated the caste-ridden Christian church as well Hindu society. In Tamil Nadu, there is a vibrant movement of Dalit Christians which question casteist church practice as well as the wider social practice of caste domination and exclusion both theoretically and practically.⁴⁷ As David Mosse (2010) tells us, the priests from Dalit background question the caste bias of main-stream churches and they question the paternalism of the churches.⁴⁸

While other Scheduled Castes and Dalits get benefit of reservations, Dalit Christians are not entitled to it. There is now a long struggle to reverse this decision. But in the mean time, many Dalit Christians in the Government schools use Hindu names to be able to avail of reservation benefits (Kumar & Robinson 2010).

Dalit Christians assert their own theology. According to Prasanna Kumari, Luther’s theology of cross is most suited to the Dalit condition with their suffering (cf. Meshak 2007). A. Arul Maria Raj also talks about subversive Dalit theology and spirituality. For Sathiananthan Clarke (1998), Dalits use drums in their day to day life. Dalit theology and spirituality is a theology and spirituality of drums—of beating drums against oppression and for liberation. For Clarke, “[.] the drum represents the Christic presence among the Dalits. [...] the drum depicts the ‘No’ of the Paraiyar to the colonizing and demonizing tendencies of the valuational system of caste communities. [...] The way of the suffering and path of Christ are intimately bound up in the drum” (1998: 188, 192, 194; also see Clarke et al. 2010).

Dalit Christians here not only build on symbols of their own life worlds such drum and the available Christian theological resources such as the Lutheran theology of cross. They also build on centuries of *Nirguna* and critical spirituality cultivated by seekers and challengers such as Ravidas and Kabir (Robinson 2003). For example, in an ethnographic work on a Dalit from Uttar Pradesh named Masih, Mathew Schmalz tells about the continued significance of the Kabir tradition

for the Dalits as well as Dalit Christians. John Massih joined a Christian Ashram of inculturation and found that in this place, there was no dialogue with the traditions of Kabir and Ravidas: "Certainly, Kabir and Ravidas were as Indian as Patanjali or Shankara. But one did not hear their name mentioned in the ashram, either in morning meditation or in Indian Christian experience" (Schmalz 2010: 200).⁴⁹ Massih wrote a poem expressing his marginalization: "How can one continue the struggle when one crosses over his life that lies before him, like a broken mirror [...] Oh, but I am a tiger in cage."⁵⁰

Christianity has also spread among the tribals of India who are called Adivasis through many processes including conversion which has been a subject of ire by many Hindus. But on the part of tribals, there is also an emergent move towards indigenization. Christian conversion has completely changed the religious affiliation of tribals in places like Nagaland. But there is also a yearning for roots here which is similar to that demonstrated in the longing of a Keshab Chandra Sen, a Pandita Ramabai or a Upadhyaya or a Amaladoss. A Christian leader from Nagaland tells us:

[...] I, like my Nagas, am a Christian, but I am not a European. I have a relationship with my God. Now my God can speak to me in dreams, just as happened to my Anglican ancestors. I do not have to be like Anglicans or Catholics and go through all those rituals. I do not need them. What I am talking about is Naga Christianity—an indigenous Naga Christianity (quoted in Frynkenberg 2010: 443).

We see the move towards indigenous Christianity among the tribals which is also part of an emergent tribal theology (see Lalruatkima 2010). This revival is part of a wider tribal awakening which we see in movements such as Danyi Polo in Arunachal Pradesh. But Nancy Lobo tells us about this complex process: "[...] through the process of indigenization the Catholic church seeks today to enmesh itself with the culture of its different community of believers. It is possible to be Christian and Adivasi [...]. On the other hand, there are processes at work within the Catholic church itself that might keep elite thinking and control effective in place" (Lobo 2010: 231).⁵¹

So movement towards Christianity in terms of conversion or the self-reflective moves of Christians and Christian communities have been accompanied by movements of indigenization and enculturation. While earlier these were thought of in terms of high-caste, Sanskritic and frames of reference such as Vedanta. Now these have been much more broadened involving multiple dialogues with histories, streams of alternative spirituality such as Kabir's, Dalit and Adivasi spirituality.⁵²

Such moves have also led to creative efforts in literature, art and paintings. Here the works of Jyoti Sahi and Susheila Williams are inspiring. Sahi painted

many pictures of Jesus embodying deeper cross-cultural spiritual realizations. Williams's picture "The Man on a Village Tree" shows Jesus crucified in a tree.⁵³

Hindu-Christian Engagement: Colonialism, Evangelism and Conversion

Hindu-Christian engagement took a complex turn with the coming of British colonial power in India. East Indian company did not encourage missionaries and the first European missionaries settled in areas other than ruled by the company such as the Danes. But slowly the situation changed and Christianity was seen by the local population as a ruling power. Missionaries and evangelists worked for conversion. They denigrated Hindu religion which created unease among the Hindus. But they also challenged practices such as caste which led to reform. Many Hindu organizations such as Ramakrishna Mission and Arya Samaj modeled their social service work Christian social service institutions such as schools and hospitals.⁵⁴ While the Raj did not necessarily support the missionaries which Frynkenberg calls Hindu Raj, members of groups such as Bibhuti Sangha in Madras opposed Christian missionaries and attacked the converts. But despite this in many parts of India conversion from marginalized section of society went on. In places like South Travancore, London Missionary Society played an important role in this. Dick Kooiman's (1989) study of it shows us how the missionary work of LMS presented a way out for low-castes such as Shanars who later on came to be known as Nadars. With the inspiration from the missionaries Shanars protested against the dress code of the prevailing caste-ridden society such as Shanar women not allowed to wear upper garment (also see Gnanadason 1994).

But in terms of cultural interaction that the work of missionaries created Koiman presents us an interesting picture. Caste Hindus came to hear the lectures of Samuel Mateer, a pioneer of the indigenization of church who transferred administrative responsibility to local people and ordained many locals as ministers. But the caste Hindus were not interested in conversion. While the low-caste converted and supported the work of his mission, they were not interested in scripture nor in the content of the belief. They were interested in material gains to their own condition of life.⁵⁵ But their primacy on material benefit has been many a time used a judgmental stick to beat their act of conversion. Here Felix Wilfred (2012) challenges us to go beyond such a dualistic anthropology and spirituality. Wilfred asks: why conversion for the sake of spiritual illumination is necessarily superior to what is done for the realization of one's survival. Wilfred here challenges us to critically think beyond judgmental categories such as rice Christians, ie. those Christians who converted for the sake of getting rice for their belly.⁵⁶ For Wilfred and other liberation theologians such as Walter Fernandez, conversion is not "an encounter between Hinduism and Christianity, but a protest on the part of Dalits against social injustice" (Kim 2012: 203).

But coming to our historical story of conversion in South Travancore, it must be noted that here not all marginalized groups converted to Christianity. While Shanars converted, Iravazas found a way in the reform movement of Narayana Guru.⁵⁷ In South Travancore also there emerged a religious reformer named Muttukuti who presented himself as an incarnation of Vishnu and offered to the untouchable castes alternative pathways of recognition and dignity (cf. Patrick 2003). He inspired a movement known as Aya Vali which gave “the subordinated Canars a realm of self-assertion, autonomy and agency, denied to them in the public sphere and in the economic and political realm” (ibid: vii). But “even as one section of society acknowledged Muttukuti as their religious leader, the missionaries of London Missionary Society, both of foreign and local origin, perceived him to be a threat to their missionary enterprises. They characterized him as Satan” (Patrick 2003: 84).

Missionary work and conversion created ripples in the existing society. It also led to new creativity as well as new ways of justifying old caste practice. For example, in Tamilnadu, H.A. Krishna Pillai (1827-1900) published *Rakshany Yatrikam* which was a Tamil adaptation of *Pilgrim's Progress*. It was “the work of a lifetime. In over 4,000 verses, it expressed depths of Christian thought and feeling within the classical idiom of the ancient Sangam poets” (Frynkenberg 2010: 225).⁵⁸ For Dennis Hudson, his poetry shows both “the continuity with the past in terms of a shared mystical vocabulary between Shivaishnavism and Christianity, and the rupture that Krishna Pillai elaborates through his verse, when he describes, as he believes the delusions of his former religious life and the clarity of the Christian *marga* [...]” (quoted in Visvanathan 1993: 14). But Krishna Pillai’s brother Muttaiya Pillai wrote a “forceful treatise on the nature of difference and why symbols of difference were important to maintain” (ibid).

Hindu-Christian Engagement: Continued and Contemporary Challenges

Colonialism, evangelism and conversion are critical questions which are not just confined to the past. For a long time, Hindus have been uneasy with the forces of conversion. Critics of forceful and fraudulent conversion includes Gandhi as well as forces of Hindu extremist organizations such as Rastriya Swayam Sevak and Bajrang Dal (Shourie 1994). But for this, it is not correct to group all these critics together (see Nadkarni 2003; 2008). Many Hindus feel offended the way their religions are portrayed by the missionaries and evangelists and would like to contribute to a transformation of such conditions of humiliation and disrespect. Some of these forces have now become more powerful and aggressive. For example, groups such as Jehova’s Witnesses and the Pentecostals openly preach that their religion is the best and conversion is the only route left for non-Christians for realizing salvation.

In post-independent India there have been several legislations to address such concerns as well as to stop forcible and gullible conversion (see Metha 2011). But these legislative moves are not innocent; they are enmeshed in wider politics of group identity, fear as well as the will to dominate. With all these difficulties, in the last quarter century Hindu extremist forces have targeted Christians and Christian communities in places like Gujarat and Odisha. The attack against Christians in Dang in the 1990s, the cruel and barbaric burning of Graham Staines and his two little sons Philip and Timothy, the murder of Swami Lakshmananda Saraswati in 2008 and the ensuing anti-Christian riots and violence is a cruel reminder of the persisting tension and violence in the relations between Hindus and Christians (cf. Giri 2005; 2009).

The Multiverse of Hindu-Christian Relations: Limits and Possibilities

In this journey, we have touched several aspects and dimensions of Hindu-Christian relations—historical, sociological, theological, spiritual and ontological. Hindus and Christians have interacted with each other in complex fields of power, belief as well as quest for truth and self-realization. In this complex field, participants have interacted with each other not only as Hindu and Christians but have sought to realize themselves as seeking selves. In this seeking we find an ontological dimension of Hindu-Christian engagement which is not confined to ontology as essence or group identity but embodies a seeking self in quest for unbounded realization. This is a weak and practical ontology of vulnerability, love and labour (cf. Vattimo 1999; Dallmayr 2005). We find glimpses of this quest in Jesus himself as well as in Sri Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Deepak Chopra, Chitta Ranjan Das, Bede Griffiths, Swami Abhishiktananda, Felix Wilfred, Subhash Anand, Michael Almaladoss and Sebastian Painadath. These selves have also created ripples in group relations and the future of Hindu-Christian engagement depends upon further creative quest at the level of self and society.

This then brings us to the much talked about issue of the historical and the mystical.⁵⁹ Indian seekers in this multiverse of engagement such as Swami Vivekananda, Gandhi and Chitta Ranjan Das have not been dismissive of their responsibility to history but they have realized the limits of the historical and the significance of mystical in the direction of practical mysticism which includes cultivation of both the transcendental and immanent, material and spiritual, self as well as group. It seems further cultivation of practical mysticism going beyond the limits of dualism of history and mysticism and cultivation of simultaneous prophetic-mystical streams in both Hinduism and Christianity is a way out of the continued legacy of violence and lack of respect which still poisons part of our fields of life and society in India, Asia and the world.⁶⁰

Endnotes:

1 Though there are controversies about it, Yogananda Paramahansa (2007) in his book refers to archival work and documentary evidence about it.

2 As Wilfred (2010: 217) writes:

When Ram Mohan Ray, the father of Indian Renaissance, wrote a little book on “The Precept of Jesus” he was attempting to read universal ethics in the life and teachings of. Ethics in the Gospels was the beginning of a Hindu appraisal of Christianity in modern times [...] But then sadly, instead of welcoming

his effort to relate Jesus the moral teacher with Indian situation, his approach was resisted by missionaries, because it did not tally with what they thought was the Christian belief system. [...] *A meaningful presence of Christianity in Asia seems to lie in what it could offer in terms of ethics than in terms of beliefs* (emphasis added).

3 It is to be noted that on March 6, 1881 Keshab celebrated “the Blessed Sacrament with rice and water instead of bread and wine [...]” (Rolland 1954: 132).

4 Omvedt talks about the elitist character of Roy: “[Roy’s arguments] were focused on the elite. [...] In fact, in presenting a religion of rationality and anti-idolatry monotheism, he was increasing the differentiation of the bhadrakalok from the subaltern masses—who were Vaishnavite devotee of one or another sect, who were not troubled by the problems of widow remarriage and sati but were very much troubled by caste. And caste was an issue that did not enter the agenda of the “Renaissance” elite reformers” (2008: 148). But Keshab “introduced Chaitanya into Brahma religious practice” (Thomas 1970: 31).

5 Note here what Rolland writes about Keshub:

A hyper-individualist by nature and doubtless just because this was the case, he early in his life recognized that part of evils of his country arose out of this same hyper-individualism, and that India needed to acquire a new moral conscience. “Let all souls be socialized and realized their unity with the people, the visible community.” The conception uniting the aristocratic unitarianism of Roy to the Indian masses, put young Keshab into communion with the most ardent aspirations of the rising generation. Just as Vivekananda in after days [...], Vivekananda believed religion to be necessary for the regeneration of race (1954: 118-119).

6 According to his biographer Arun Kumar Mukherjee, “Keshab developed a new style of Bengali prose—forceful, fluent, simple and communicative. [...] He also] developed a new style of English prose—based on oratory. It was poetical oratory which married itself to his highly spiritual teaching as perfect music unto noble minds” (Mukherjee 1992: 59).

7 However Thomas makes clear that Sen’s project of Christ-centered integration was different from building a “universal religion based on the equality of all religions” (1970: 73).

8 Though Rajeev Malhotra (2007) questions the equation of Spirit with Sakti, what Bede Griffiths (1976: 129) writes below resonates with many Hindus:

The Spirit is the *Sakti*—the power—of the Godhead, the breath by which the Word is uttered, the energy which flows from the Father into the Word and overflows in the creation. It is by the Spirit that ‘ideas’ in the Word are given form and substance and the creation comes into being. [...] The Spirit is the feminine principle in the Godhead, the Mother of all creation. It is in her that the seeds of the Word are planted and she nurtures them and brings them forth in creation [...] It is the Spirit which is continually drawing us into the divine life. For the Spirit is that divine life latent in nature and becoming conscious in us. By the Spirit we know that we are not merely flesh and blood, formed from the matter of the universe, not merely the subject of sensations, feelings, imaginations and thoughts, but an energy of love which seeks always to transcend the barriers of

space and time and to discover the Divine Life

The above meditation and realization of Spirit as Sakti can be invitation to Christians especially Pentecostals who speak a lot about the Spirit. But while their Spirit seems to be mainly confined to gift of Tongues. Griffiths cross-cultural and spiritual realization of Spirit can be a transformative stream in contemporary Christianity not only in Asia but all over the world.

9 Ramakrishna's biographer Romain Rolland writes about it:

Sometimes about November, 1874, a certain Mallik, a Hindu of Calcutta, with a garden near Dakhineswar read the Bible to him. For the first time Ramakrishna met Christ. Shortly afterwards the word was made flesh. The life of Jesus secretly pervaded him. One day when he was sitting in the room of a friend, a rich Hindu, he saw on the wall a picture representing the Madonna and the Child. The figures became alive. Then the expected came to pass according to the invariable order of the Spirit; the holy visions came close to him and entered into him so that his whole being was being impregnated with them. Then one afternoon in the grave of Dakhineswar he saw coming towards him a person with beautiful large eyes, a serene regond and a fair skin. Although he did not know who it was, he succumbed to the charm of his unknown guest. He drew near and a voice sang in the depths of Ramakrishna's soul: Behold the Christ, who shed his heart's blood for the redemption of the world, who suffered a sea of anguish for love of men. It is He, the master Yogin, who is in eternal union with God. It is Jesus, Love incarnate [...] The son of Man embraced the son of the Mother, and became merged in him. Ramakrishna was lost in ecstasy. Once again he realised union with Brahman. Then gradually he came down to earth, but from that time he believed in the Divinity of Jesus Christ, the Incarnate God. But for him Christ was not the only Incarnation. Buddha and Krishna were others India (1954: 83, 87).

10 In his address Swami Vivekananda challenged his audience:

With all your attempts to paint him with blue eyes and yellow hair, the Nazarene was still an Oriental. All the similies, the imagaries, in which the Bible is written—the scenes, the locations, the attitudes, the groups, the poetry, and symbol, --speak to you of the Orient, of the bright sky, of the heat, of the sun, of the desert, of the thirsty men and animals; of men and women coming with pitchers on their heads to fill them at wells; of the flocks, of the ploughmen, of the cultivation that is going on around; of the water-mill and wheel, of the mill-pond, of the millstones. All these are to be seen today in Asia (2011: 11-12).

11 For Swami Vivekananda,

We are not here to discuss how much of the New Testament is true, we are not here to discuss how much of that life is historical. [...] But there is something behind it, something we want to imitate. [...] You cannot imitate that which you never perceived. But there must have been a nucleus, a tremendous power that came down, a marvelous manifestation of spiritual power—and of that we are speaking (2011: 22-23).

12 Thomas does this when he writes:

Vivekananda rejects the ethical Christ for the mystic Christ [...] the Sermon on the Mount, for Vivekananda, is not primarily ethics, but an expression of the spirituality of self-renunciation (Thomas 1970: 125).

13 Chitta Ranjan Das used to often tell us about this story (see Das 1995). Romain Rolland also makes an interesting remark that without this continuous challenge from Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda would have become another Dayananda Sarasvati: "Dayananda was what Vivekananda would have been, if he had not encountered Ramakrishna" (1954: 143). Both Swami Dayananda and Swami Vivekananda had enormous energy but Rolland suggests that it is Ramakrishna's influence which made the later socially committed to transforming suffering as well as open to other religions such as Christianity. While Swami Dayananda Sarasvati was also engaged with social upliftment, he lacked Ramakrishna-Vivekananda dialogical engagement with other religions.

14 About this it is written in one of the records of Ramakrishna Mission:

The story begins on a winter night in a village named Antpur not very far from Calcutta. Some young monks were gathered around a blazing fire under the open sky. They were all direct disciples of Ramakrishna [...] That night, after a long session of meditation, Narendranath told his *gurubhais* the story of Jesus Christ, the mystery of His wondrous birth and death and His subsequent resurrection. Through the eloquence of Narendra, the boys were admitted to the apostolic world where in Paul had preached the gospel of the arisen Christ and Naren made his plea to them to become Christs themselves to realize God [...] standing before *dhuni* (wood-fire), with the flames lighting up their countenances and cracking of the wood as the sole disturbance of their thoughts, they took the vow of Sannyasa before God and one another (Vivekananda Kendra Prakashan Trust 2009: 9-10).

Romain Rolland also writes about the initial period of the seminary and the mission:

In this panorama of all the heroic and divine thoughts of humanity, we must again notice the place of honour which seems to have been given to Christ and the Gospels. These Hindu monks kept Good Friday, and they sang the Canticles of St. Francis. Naren spoke to them of Christian saints, the founders of the Western Orders. The Imitation of Jesus Christ was their bedside book together with the Bhagavad-Gita. Nevertheless there was never for a moment any question of enrolling themselves with the Church of Christ. They were and remained complete and uncompromising Vedantic Advaitists. But they incorporated in their faith all the faiths of the world. The waters of the Jordan mingled with their Ganga (Rolland 2010: 8).

15 As Chakkarai tells us: “[...] the mere Scripture teaching would not have any impression on my mind and lately by the advent of Swami, whose conception of the catholicity of Vedanta destroyed my Hindu prejudices against Christianity as a foreign religion. It was he that first taught me to regard Christianity an essentially Oriental faith” (quoted in Pandian 2010: 34).

16 Schouten further tells us:

Ranganathananda quotes two texts from the Upanishads in order to demonstrate that the goal in both religions is identical. These texts could be translated as ‘Verily, the self must be seen,’ and ‘He who is without desire, sees the greatness of the self’ (Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad 11: 45; Katha Upanishad 1: 2: 20). Typical for the linguistic usage in the Ramakrishna Movement is that in both texts the words for ‘see’ are translated by ‘realize.’ All emphasis is on deliberate human endeavour (2012: 100).

17 In this context, what Thomas writes below deserves our careful consideration:

While Brahmoism as a movement of reform in Hinduism had absorbed a great many of the Christian notions about religion it had very shallow roots in the fundamental metaphysical framework of Hinduism. Nehemiah Goreh was certainly right in asserting that this metaphysical framework was Advaita Vedanta [...] and, as he predicted, Brahmoism withered, without roots either in fundamental Hinduism or in Christian revelation. But what he did not predict did happen, namely the redefinition of Advaita Vedanta, with its assertion of its mystic center, but with a capacity to absorb into its framework the value of moral struggle and social service (1970: 146).

18 Yogananda Paramahansa writes:

We must know Jesus an Oriental Christ, a supreme Yogi who manifested full mastery of the universal science of God-Union, and thus could speak, and act as a Saviour with the voice and authority of God. He has been Westernized too much (Yogananda 2007: 90).

19 In the words of Radhakrishnan:

The abandonment of the ego is the identification with a fuller life and consciousness. The soul is raised to a sense of its universality. In Gethsemane, Christ as an individual felt that the ego should pass away [...] The secret of the cross is the crucifixion of the ego and the yielding to the will of God. ‘Thy will be done’ (quoted in Thomas 1970: 100).

In a recent essay, Jesudas Athyal also tells us that Radhakrishnan in his *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* attempts to “demonstrate inter alia that Christ and Christianity were influenced

by many Eastern elements such as mysticism, asceticism and non-violence" (Athyal 2012: 578).

20 Speaking of his experience of being with Gandhi at his historic fast in Delhi, C.F. Andrews writes;

Instinctively my gaze turned back to the frail, wasted, tortured spirit on the terrace by my side, bearing the sins and sorrows of his people [...] And in that hour of vision, I knew more deeply, in my own personal life, the meaning of the Cross (quoted in Thomas 1970: 226).

21 George lived with his conviction:

An undogmatic Christianity, true to the spiritual insight of Jesus of Nazareth, will yet discover and establish its links with liberal elements in all other religions, and will especially find its rightful place in that larger fellowship of faiths that is yet to be (quoted in Thomas 1970: 219)

22 Here Mary John's work sheds much light. He tells us about one "Joseph Baptista (1864-1930), fondly called Kaka Baptista, [who] was a close friend of Bala Gangadhara Tilak. He is claimed to be the one who first suggested the Home Rule Movement to Tilak even before Annie Besant launched it" (John 2011: 61).

23 For George, "[...] Unlike a natural phenomenon a spiritual fact is a challenge—you have got to do something about it—make up your mind, take an attitude towards it. [...] Gandhi is a spiritual fact of this category" (1939: 23).

24 Radhakrishna also raises the issue of cross-cultural realization and understanding of Christianity in India in this foreword:

If Europe interpreted Christianity in terms of his own culture, Greek thought and Roman imagination, there is no reason why Indian Christian should not relate the message of salvation in Christ to the larger spiritual background of India. Possibly, India's religious insight may help to revify Christianity, not only in India but the world at large. Can't we have a Vedanta tradition in Christianity? The late Max Muller thought of himself as a Christian Vedantin. There are thousands in the West today who have acquired a new and deeper impulse of religious life through the influence of Hindu thought. If even non-Indian Christian find it easier to understand Christianity in the light of Vedanta, it is unfortunate that Indian Christians are led to adopt an attitude of indifference, if not hostility, to Hindu religion and metaphysics (in George 1939: 10).

25 Gandhi considered Jesus Christ a supreme artist because for him, Jesus lived life as a whole. He wanted to live life as a work of art as Jesus did and he wanted also to die like him. In his visit to Vatican in 1931 while looking at the pictures, he stood in silence and meditation in front of the picture of Crucifixion (from talk of Narayana Desai, "Gandhi and the Arts," Kalakeshetra Foundation, September 8, 2012).

26 It is probably for this reason that Sri Aurobindo had once commented that Gandhi's Christianity is Russian Christianity.

27 Though in his critique of missionary conversion Gandhi sometimes used a language of disrespect which needs transformation:

Would you preach the Gospel to a cow? Well, some of the Untouchables are worse than cows in understanding. I mean they can no more distinguish between the relative merits of Islam, Hinduism and Christianity than a cow (quoted in Wilfred 2007: 146).

28 It is important here also to note the dialogue between Azariah and Ambedkar. Rudolf C. Heredia tells us about the following about it:

In 1936 Ambedkar met Azariah and asked, if in becoming Christians the Harijans would be united as one people in one church, free from prejudice, Azariah later admitted that he had never felt so ashamed because he could not answer "yes," but could only come away in disgrace (Heredia 2007: 71).

29 Schouten helps us understanding the influence of his family background especially the devotional background of her mother belonging to the *Pranami sampradaya* on Gandhi's open-ended approach to religion:

Gandhi's mother 'belonged to the *Pranami sampradaya*. [...] The more remarkable thing about this school in Vaishnavism is its extensive openness towards other religious traditions, both within and outside of Hinduism. This included a remarkable habit of placing various sacred texts next to one another to read and worship (2012: 150-151).

About Swami Prannath, the leader of this community, Schouten writes:

Swami Prannath was the leader of the pranami in the second half of the 17th century [...] He was gradually convinced that all religions ultimately came down to the same thing. [...] To enlarge his knowledge of Islam, he made various trips to Arabic countries where he built up contacts with Islamic theologians. Nor did the Christian faith lie outside of his interest. Through the Portuguese and British people he encountered in the harbor city of Gujarat, he acquired some knowledge of the Bible and Church doctrine (2012: 152).

30 Das tells us about it:

In 1322, it is said, Pope John XXII condemned as heretical the doctrine of poverty of Christ and thereafter the early lives of St Francis were rewritten to down the unfortunate views of the founder on that subject (2012: 28).

31 Sri Aurobindo hints at it in his essay, "Our Ideals" when he talks about Buddhism and Vaishnavism impacting Semitic temperament through Christianity. Yogananda Paramahansa (2007) also talks about the journey of Jesus to India and Tibet and he gives documentary evidence of it.

32 Harrison tells us that "exemplary reasoning" is different from "scriptural reasoning" and inter-religious dialogue through "exemplary practitioners of one's faith" (2011: 24). Furthermore, "exemplary reasoning is, essentially, a process of thinking with others about examples or models. The use of the term 'reasoning' rather than 'reason' indicates that it is involved in an ongoing process of reflection" (ibid: 29).

33 Schouten writes about it:

[In earlier translation] The religious terminology was derived partly from Sanskrit and she suspected that elements of Hinduism came with them. [...] She studied Greek and also acquired some knowledge of Hebrew. Moreover, she made use of the linguistic skills of Indians of Jewish ancestry, from the 'Beni-Israeli community.' She completed her translation of the Bible shortly before her death in 1922 (2012: 72).

Chitta Ranjan Das also writes the following about her translation: "Ramabai's translation is in simple colloquial Marathi in a style very different from the archaic classical way in which the missionaries have done it" (Das 2012: 235-236).

34 Robert Eric Frynkenberg (2010: 390) also tells us:

Ramabai continued to see herself as both 'Hindu' and 'Christian'—a pilgrim attempting to resolve inner conflicts within herself and within her own people in India. Refusing to become a clone, a proselyte, or a hostage of either Anglican, or any other form of Christendom, she withstood each onslaught and kept her balance. Within her lay a toughness forged on anvils of hard experience [...]

35 Once a missionary asked Gandhi, "How do you think should the missionaries identify themselves with the masses? The answer was just three words: 'Copy Charlie Andrews'" (quoted in Visvanathan 2007: 63).

36 For Swami Abhisiktananda,

Advaita is already present at the root of the Christian experience. It is simply the mystery

that God and world are not two. The mystery of unity, *ekatvam*, in God and in all works of God, is personified by the Spirit. Before leaving his disciples, Jesus laid great stress on the mysterious presence of Spirit in them [...]

Instead of speaking of synthesis or transcendence, it would be much more accurate to speak of the advaitic dimension of revelation and of Christianity. This is also a dimension inherent in the act of faith which leads to salvation—we should perhaps call it a dimension of depth, of which contact with the Upanishadic experience makes one more fully aware (Abhishiktananda 1969: 101).

Furthermore,

The problem which Advaita poses for the Church is in fact an existential one. It is a providential means of purification offered to the Church by God at the very moment when her encounter with the modern technological world of the West has made her more than ever aware of the burden of her history and her deep need for a return to her spiritual roots.

Advaita does not however ask of Christianity that it should transcend itself, and set out towards a further goal beyond itself, any more than Christianity asks Vedanta to disown all that it is, in order to transcend itself and be transformed into Christianity. If there must be a transcendence, then what is needed is an inward transcendence. For both Christianity and Vedanta this means that they should continue to dig down ever more deeply in search of their own living sources, should investigate ever more profoundly the secret of their own being, until each discovers in the other the presence of its own most inward mystery (ibid: 106).

He also challenges us to realize the comparative significance of Christian encounter with Greek and Upanishadic spirits:

Greece was chosen for a different mission. She had to provide the infant church with the means of expressing its conceptual terms the essential message she had received from the Lord [...]

To the Vedantic experience, however, was entrusted the task of preparing for the Spirit of Wisdom. Although in older in time than the Greek discovery of the world of the intellect, it has been called later in history to make its contribution to the Church and so enter into the plan of salvation. This is fitting, for it opens up to the action of grace that level of the human psyche which seems to mark the culmination of all that man is capable of finding and realizing in himself. In the design of providence Vedanta is surely the ultimate preparation for the Gospel, for it opens to action of grace that level of the human psyche which seems to mark the culmination of all that man is capable of finding and realizing in himself. In the design of providence, Vedanta is surely the ultimate preparation for the Gospel, for it disposes man to comprehend its most sublime mysteries [...] (ibid: 118).

37 He also writes: "The Church of the poor ought to be, not a Church that gives to the poor, but one which lives in poverty" (quoted in Visvanathan 2007: 185).

38 Kurusimala Asrham is more liturgical in its prayer while in Santivanam the mode of prayer is more contemplative and open-ended. According to Jesu Rajan, "His [Bede Griffith's] movement from Kurusimala 'Hill of the Cross' to Santivana 'Forest of Peace' is not a mere geographical movement. It is rather a theological movement, a movement from a life centered on liturgy and community life to a life centered on contemplation" (Rajan 1989: 216).

Griffiths himself tells us about it:

We no longer see the liturgy of common prayer as the center of life of a monk. It is the contemplative prayer when Holy Spirit is experienced in its immediate presence and not through outward signs that becomes the center of the life of a monk [...]. If we make the liturgy and Eucharist the center of our lives we necessarily exclude Hindus and people of any other religion from our inner life. It is not in external rites, however sacred, that we make contrast with our brother and sisters in other religions but through mediation and contemplative prayer (quoted in Rajan 1989: 204).

39 What Griffiths writes deserves our careful consideration here:

In the integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo the values of matter and life and the human consciousness and the experience of personal God are not lost in the Ultimate Reality, the divine Sachchidanada. Matter and life and consciousness in man are seen to be evolving towards the divine life and divine consciousness, in which they are not annihilated but fulfilled.

This is the goal of a Christian yoga. Body and soul are to be transfigured by the divine life and to participate in the divine consciousness (1976: 138).

40 For Bede Griffiths, “true convergence between Hinduism and Christianity can take place mainly in the life of *Sannyasa*” (Rajan 1989: 149). What Rajan writes below about the vocation of a Christian sannyasin deserves our careful attention:

To a Christian *Sannyasin* Jesus is his *sadguru*, the true guru. [...] He leads him to the *Paramguru*, the Father [...] Obedience of a Christian sannyasin could be compared to a jnana yoga [...] Knowledge of the Supreme Reality, Brahavidya, frees a person from all bondage. In the same way the Christian *sannyasin* who surrenders his self to the Supreme Reality finds true freedom [...] (ibid: 210).

41 According to Paul Prathathu, “Today there are more than hundred of Christian asrams, both Catholic and Protestant, experimenting in community living, in rural service, in indigenous worship and in theological research in various branches through different *sadhanas*” (1997: 207).

What Prathathu writes below about the spiritual theology of Asram deserves our careful attention:

The asram is a place of spiritual effort-srama. [...] Holiness in Wholeness is a unique contribution of the Christian asram. Holiness is the goal of life at the Christian asram. Integration is the principle of srama there. [...] The whole srama is oriented towards integration. It is an integration of the divine and the human with that of the Cosmic (ibid: 271).

42 The Ashram which is located in a hill near Vagmanon, Kerala combines Indian spiritual practices such as meditation and singing of devotional songs with Christian spiritual practice especially from the Benedictian-Cisterian tradition. As the Ashram was inspired by Gandhi’s concept of bread labor, here monks earn their livelihood by raising and milking cows, Gandhi himself was inspired by the Cisterian spiritual tradition. After a visit to a monastery in South Africa, Gandhi had written:

I once stayed with Cistercian monks. They are votaries of divine love, of poverty, of chastity. Their monastery was a veritable garden. There was a sweet silence pervading the whole atmosphere. I still live under the charm of their cells. It would be my ideal to found such an institution.

43 Anand writes:

Sometimes I sit for prayer in a chapel with darkness all around me. More than once I have caught myself contemplating the flame of the oil-lamp placed close to the tabernacle. The dance of the fire grips me, and I can go on watching it for long, unmindful of the passing of time. Slowly as I began to meditate on the Nataraj icon—and I have been doing this for quite some years now—I understand a little what was happening to me. The Spirit whom I received in Baptism has not pushed out the Spirit I received from my ancestors. The more I try to contemplate the Nataraj icon the more it fascinates me, and I thank God for making me a child of the land which has given to the world an icon which is aesthetically superb and theologically profound. This icon fascinates me all the more because I am trying to reflect on my Christian faith in the light of Hindu wisdom. I find the Nataraj icon very appropriate to express my own faith.

Jesus tells us that God, who as the perfect Being (*sat*) grounds all being, is a most loving Father. He is indeed the Merciful One. He is Shiva. In Him there is perfect self-possession and self-awareness (cit): the primordial Word (*logos* or *shabda*). From this perfect self-awareness of perfect Being arises the perfect joy of Being (*ananda*), and from this springs forth Breath (*pneuma*), that Spirit which makes Speech (*vac*) possible. The Nataraj icon can be seen as expressive of this Trinitarian mystery (Anand 2004: 168-169).

Here the following thoughts of Henryk Skolimowski on dancing Shiva are helpful and we can

read these together with Anand and realize the deeper significance of a dancing Shiva and dancing Christ in our lives, societies and the cosmos:

Dancing Shiva is the symbol of life unfolding, of recreating itself, partly destroying itself in order to create *novo*. Dancing Shiva is you and me engaged in the creative / destructive process of life. [...] The eternal dance of Shiva becomes the dance of healing—of the planet and ourselves, becomes the dance of purifying our rivers, our mountains and our bodies [...] The new dance of Shiva is a form of Eco-Yoga, for the whole society [...] (1991: 5, 10, 13).

44 Anand writes:

Siva too has a maternal side deep within him because he is *ardha-nari-isvara*, and *lasya* is his tender, nurturing dance. It is very significant that, in the *Siva-Sahasra-nama*, Siva is described not only as the great male organ (maha-linga, 74a)—but only once, and also as the great womb (maha-garbha, 81d, 103c, 131a)—that too thrice! In primal symbolism the tree has a great affinity with woman and hence a maternal character. Siva not only appears like a tree, but himself the cosmic Tree (2004: 163).

I have also explored this in part of the following poem:

Mata Krista Namoh, Krista Mata Nama
Garva Krista Namoh, Christa Garbha Namoh

(Salutations to Mother Christ, Christ Mother
Saltutations to Wom Christ, Christ Womb)

I have also explored Cross as our mother in the following poem, "Cross! Our Mother":

Oh Cross!
Our Mother
Your Four Sides
The Crucified Middle
Are Not Only a Square
Of Torture, Suffering and Cruelty
You are a Circle of Compassion
Of One and Many—
Nature, Divine and Man
Of Meeting and Evolution

Oh Cross!
You are a Field
In Your Field
We learn our
Limitations and Possibilities
In your lap
Hands of compassion
Give us strength
Trust and Hope
We embrace you
Our pain and suffering
Become circles of awakening
From ashes arise the Gold
Flowers of Transformations

45 We can also here bring together Anand's realization of Christ as dancing Shiva and Wilfred's realization of Christ as flute playing Krishna.

46 In the words of Frynkenberg (2010: 457):

Many of these Brahmin Christians focused their attention on intellectual or mystical-cum-spiritual (bhakti) issues [...] that sought for links between the great traditions from which they themselves had come and from which most of them never entirely parted. Even Pandita Ramabai's own *bhakti* devotionalism did not begin to veer away from her own pure [...] identity until after her third Christian conversion and the 'Holy Ghost' revival that broke twenty years later (1905) at the Mukti Mission in Kedagaon. Nor can the Christian career of Sadhu Sundar Singh be seen as reflecting a close identification with either *Adivasi* or *avarna* forms of Indian Christianity [...]

47 Mosse writes about this:

[...] A Dalit-focused caste-based approach to social activism gradually became the predominant form among activists within the priesthood, beginning with the Jesuits of Madurai Province, whose anti-caste 'social action ministry' inverted the social 'accommodations' of their 17th-century founder Robert de Nobili. Indeed, from 1987 the Jesuit 'option for the poor' had been firmly recast as a Dalit option [...] despite its 'Dalit option,' only 18 of the 300 odd Jesuit priests were Dalits (Mosse 2010, 237, 239).

48 For Mosse, "[...] as public service institutions-Catholic schools and technical colleges transacted symbols of caste honor and prestige much as temples or churches did in the past" (2010: 245).

49 Pandian (2010) offers a similar critique of Vengal Chakkarai's project of indigenization which for him is mainly Brahminical.

50 The following interpretation is insightful:

Even in its brevity, the partial poem is replete with words evocative of Dalits and their condition: 'struggle' (*sangharsh*), 'cage' (*pinjara*) and 'tiger' (*sher*). But the image of the 'broken mirror' (*tuta darpan*) says the most about John, not to mention Dalit religion on the margins. In *nirguni* poetry, the mirror is often a sign of vanity, as it is in Kabir's famous song 'what face do you see in the mirror (*darpana*)? In one sense, John uses the mirror to represent his reflecting on his shattered pride. In another sense, he also seems to be mourning his lost dreams (Schmalz 2010: 206).

51 In his study of Christianity among the Oraons, Peggy Froerer tells us how Christian church and the priests demonize the local deities and subject the practitioners to social and financial punishment: "[...] a system of ostracism and fines is instituted against those found guilty in Unchristian activities, with a mechanism of excommunication or 'outcasting,' where participants are excluded from the school until such fines are paid and confession is extracted" (2010: 135; also see Froerer 2007).

52 This is in tune with the perspectives of scholars such as Judith Brown and Robert Frynkenberg. For Brown, "India's history has been marked by a religious pluralism in which converts to Christianity carried with them much from their former beliefs and cultural practices" (Coward 2004; cf. Brown & Frynkenberg 2002). This has contributed to "new Indian modes of worship and theological emphasis" (ibid).

53 For Scouten,

Under the influence of *dalit* theology we see another representation of Jesus emerging in recent years. In addition to what has now become the traditional depiction of an exalted teacher of wisdom or a cosmic figure, we now see him in villages, associated with the culture of the low-caste people. Jyoti Sahi, for instance, painted Christ in his later work a dancer who impassions people with a large hand drum (2012: 255).

54 Rajeev Bhargava (2012) discusses some of these changes in Hindu organizations and the accompanying processes of what he calls "social democratization" but he does not seem to acknowledge how these changes were brought about by encounter with Christianity.

55 Samuel Meteir, who spent the better part of his life among the *Pulayas* of Trivandrum district, summarized their frank enquiries about the temporal benefits of Christianity in the following way:

What is the profit of learning your religion? Will you feed us? Shall we be freed from dying? Shall we be allowed to steal when we are hungry and have nothing to eat? May we take as many wives as we please? (quoted in Kooiman 1989: 170).

56 For Wilfred, such labeling reflects a “dichotomous anthropology, which contrasts and hierarchizes the material and the spiritual in human. By hierarchizing the material and the spiritual, and subordinating the latter to the former a framework is created for the subordination of Dalits to the caste-Christians, who represent higher spiritual realm” (2012: 594). Wilfred also challenges us to understand the longing for material security on the part of the low-caste and the rich people’s craving for money:

The quest for rice was a quest for life, and it cannot be placed on par with the greed for material possessions by the rich and the powerful [...] In their search for material goods, security and dignity in the church, our Dalit sisters and brothers were seeking life, which they continue to affirm with the power of the Spirit against those who deny it through individual and collective selfishness (ibid: 596).

The conflict between material and spiritual that Wilfred talks about finds an interesting resonance in the Webb Kean’s (2007) study of conversion in Indonesia. For Keane while Dutch missionaries focused on content of belief, the people of Shumba were interested in their material objects which were denigrated as fetishes by the missionaries.

57 Shnaras now Nadars belonged to low-caste position in South Travancore while the Iravazas, also considered untouchable in caste hierarchy, belonged to North Travancore.

58 Felix Wilfred (personal communication) here urges us to understand the influence of Hindu tradition in the creation of Christian literature: “For example, the widely acclaimed classic *Thembavani* by the Italian missionary Beschi reflects the way Hindu gods and goddesses are presented in traditional literature.”

59 Some Hindus here think that Judeo-Christian tradition is reluctant to give up its history-centeredness which would also make it give up its claim to uniqueness: “Jewish and Christian religions cannot afford to compromise on their history-centric beliefs, because to do so would be tantamount to surrendering their claim of uniqueness access to knowledge of God’s will” (Malhotra 2011: 90). For Rajiv Malhotra, here yoga provides freedom from history.

60 Here we can reflect upon the following conversation between Ramin Jahanbegloo and Peter Desouza in which Jahanbegloo asks De Souza: “[Vivekananda] entertained a vision of India having a Vedantic brain, an Islamic body, and a Christian heart. Do you think India today has a Christian heart?” (Jahanbegloo 2008: 164). De Souza replies: “I think if there is something like Christian heart then we would like to have it. I think the idea of fraternity, brotherhood and sisterhood is there in Christianity. The world is moving away from these sensibilities and that’s the cause for some degree of gloom actually” (ibid).

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**ПОЛИТИКОЛОГИЈА РЕЛИГИЈЕ И СЛОЖЕНА ДУХОВНОСТ
ВЕРСКИХ СУСРЕТА И КОРЕАЛИЗАЦИЈЕ:
РАЗНОВРСНОСТ ХИНДУ АНГАЖОВАЊА СА
ХРИШЋАНСТВОМ У ИНДИЈИ**

Резиме

Овај рад разматра сложеност духовне потраге и прекограничне дијалоге у Индији. Дискутује о разноврсности ангажовања Хиндуса и хришћана у плуралитету струја сарадње, контрадикције и конфронтације. Разматра сложену историју сусрета између Хиндуса и хришћана. Бави се и међурелигијским дијалогом који је покренут од стране верских вођа, реформатора и обичног народа из обе традиције.

Кључне речи: хинду – хришћанско ангажовање, политикологија религије и сложеност духовних прохтева, међурелигијски дијалог

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