

Hindu Nationalism and Christian Witness in India

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Abstract

"Hindu Nationalism and Christian Witness" explores the complex relationship between Hindu nationalism and Christian mission work in India. This paper discusses the ideological underpinnings of Hindu nationalism and its impact on religious minorities, particularly Christians. It examines the historical context, key ideological tenets, and political motivations of Hindu nationalism, highlighting its influence on social, and religious spheres.

This paper explores the strategies employed by Christian organizations to navigate these challenges while maintaining their mission of spreading the Christian faith. The paper discusses the role of Christian witness in response to Hindu nationalism. It highlights the importance of a new paradigm shift for Christian witness in the emergence of Hindu nationalism.

Key Words: Christian Mission, Hindu Nationalism, Hindutva Ideology, Mission Paradigms, Religious Minorities, Secularism, Christian Witness.

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Introduction

Rise of Hindu Nationalism is the one of the current major challenges for the Christian witness in India. This phenomenon has been growing steadily with evolving Hindutva sentiments and false propaganda against Christian witness and mission work.

Hindu Religious nationalism has grown stronger in India. Upsurge of Religious Nationalism has been the major challenges for the Christian missions in India today. This phenomenon has been growing in India. The increasing influence and the growth of Christian population with mushrooming of new churches in India alerted the religious nationalist groups. In some places, these groups with the support of Hindutva right-wing political parties have brought about systematic opposition and harm upon the pastors and Christian community. Cases of severe atrocities have been reported all year round in different parts of city and especially in those areas where churches are growing. These measures include systematic physical attack on Christian leaders, demolishing Church buildings, intimidation, production of anti-Christian literature and forceful re-conversion. In addition to this, there is an increase in the production of Hindu apologetical literature aimed to attack Christian faith at an academic level and challenge the foundational beliefs of Christianity through print media and social media.

For this reason, there is a significant need for identifying and understanding the challenges faced by the church planters and Christian mission practitioners to identify and comprehend the challenges and to propose relevant methods and mission strategies to plant churches among the urban communities especially urban middle class Hindus.

Origin and Expansion of Hindu Religious Nationalism in India

The concept of secularism that provided an ideological framework for modern India was integrally linked to the nationalist movement that led to the country's independence. It can be said that there were two social movements active in India throughout the twentieth century. The first can be labelled as secular nationalism that was represented by Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and others – which was the mainstream movement in the country and provided the leadership for the independence struggle against the British.

The second, religion-based nationalist movements were also active during this period. V. D. Savarkar of the Hindu Mahasabha endorsed the idea of a Hindu nation while M. S. Golvarkar's Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) opposed the division of India. Muhammad Ali Jinnah's Muslim League, on the other hand, stood for the two-nation theory with a Pakistan for Muslims separate from India. The fact that Muslim League succeeded in dividing the nation into two, with devastating consequences on both sides, further strengthened the argument of the secular nationalist movement. Amartya Sen echoed the national spirit of the time when he stated, "(t)here was a widely shared determination not only to have a secular democracy in what remained of India, after partition with Pakistan, but also to defend – and celebrate – India's multireligious and multicultural heritage." (Quoted by Amartya Sen, "The Politics of History" in *Pluralism and Democracy in India*, 22).

Spread of western values through liberal English education and the expansion of Christianity through mass conversions were perceived as the cause of decline of Hindu culture and values. Therefore, for defense of religion political mobilization was seen as necessary. The development of Hindu fundamentalism is a modern phenomenon in India in response to the growing missionary threat from Christianity and Islam, which gradually took political and cultural forms. According to T.N. Madan "the emergence of fundamentalism in Hindu society is a later development than in Muslim and even Sikh society. The roots of Hindu fundamentalism go back to the nineteenth century and its political and social formations to the first half of the twentieth century...and remained a regional phenomenon for several decades. (*Modern Myths Locked Minds*, 217). Cherian points out that "this phenomenon began with a kind of cultural renaissance, resorting to going back to the roots of cultural and traditional aspects of Hinduism. Eventually, this found a place among Hindu, by demanding and striving the need for establishing and strengthening cultural traditions of a rhetorical golden age". (*Hindutva Agenda and Minority Rights*, 3). Its lineage of development can be traced from the earliest forms of Arya Samaj, a Hindu Reformist movement founded in 1875 by Swami Dayananda Saraswathi (1824-1883). His book *Satyartha Prakash* (Light of truth) is considered as the most important ideological text book of the movement he founded. His goal is to convince the readers of the supremacy of Vedic religion. His Hindu social reform movement adopted certain features from the Lutheran Reformation. His moto included, "Back to Vedas," like Luther's moto, "Back to the Scripture" He introduced a new rite of *Sudhi*, reconversion of Christians from the Chura outcaste. (*Future of Christian Mission in India*, 96.) Arya samaj urged Hindus to go back to the roots-to the original Hinduism i.e., the Vedic Hinduism.

Along with Arya samaj, the Hindu political party, Hindu Maha Sabha was started in 1915, aiming at protection of Hindu interests like protection of the cow and promotion of Sanskrit and Hindi. other organizations such as Nagari Pracharini Sabha, the Hindu Sabha, the Hindu Mahasabha, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), and later progeny.

Followers of each organization have, in turn, become successively more exclusive, more extremist, more revivalistic, more reactionary and more separatist than those which went before. Chief among the most recent and militant have been those *jagarans*, *pandarams* and

Sadhus who are now members of the Dharma Samsad. Within this General Dharmic Council, leaders of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the Virat Hindu Sammelan, Hindu Samajotsav, Bajrang Dal, and the Shiv Sena have worked together. Together, members of these and other radical organizations have generated what Romalia Thapar called 'Syndicated Hinduism' (The *Hindus and Their Isms*, 14-22).

Influenced by Lokmanya Tilak, a Congress extremist from Poona, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, a Maharashtrian Chitpavan Brahmin (a superior sub-caste within the Brahmin hierarchy), after imprisonment in the Andaman Islands for twelve years for terrorist activities against the British administrators, published his book *Hindutva. Who is a Hindu?* (1923), assertively preferred the term 'Hindu', tracing it back to the geographical designation Sindhu. According to him, "Hindus were the people who lived in the land between the river Sindhu (Indus) and the high seas, and whose original scriptures were the Vedas. Dayanand called the 'Aryans' to defend the truth by going back to the scriptures, while Savarkar emphasized the notion of a chosen or a special people" (*Hindutva*, 113). Savarkar argued that "only those who are bound by the Hindu culture and uphold India as their *Pitrubhumi* or fatherland and *Punyabhoomi* or holy land is far off in Arabia and Palestine, do not belong to this soil." (*Hindutva*, 113). His slogan is "Hinduise all politics and militarize Hinduism." (Quoted by Guha, *India After Gandhi*, 26). In the Hindu Rashtra, Muslims and Christians have no place.

"The exclusivist Hindutva policy was radically opposed to the all-inclusive philosophy of Indian National Congress. His followers, M.S. Golwalkar, a Maharashtrian Brahmin, born at Ramtek in 1906 near Nagpur and was the only surviving son among the nine children of the parents. After his initial education he went to Banaras Hindu University where he studied zoology and possibly taught until 1933. Interestingly, he was won over the cause of Hindu nation by a prominent congress leader, Madan Mohan Malviya. According to an RSS publication, while studying at Banaras Hindu University, "[The] benign and inspiring influence of Pt. Madan Mohan Malviya, the founder of the University and a reputed Hindu leader of yester-years, prodded young Madhav Golwalkar to work for the Hindu cause". (*Bunch of Thoughts*, xx). According to a publication of RSS, Golwalkar enrolled as a member of the RSS in 1933 but after working briefly for the RSS he turned towards spiritualism and suddenly left for the 'saragachi' Ashram of Ramakrishna Math in the Himalayas, to be a 'sanyasi'. He was subsequently initiated with 'Mantra Deeksha' by Swami Akhandananda, a Gurubhai or close associate of Vivekananda. But he was there for a few months. Later he renounced his 'sanyas' also and by 1937 became active in the RSS again. Eventually, he was named by Hedgewar as his successor despite his being relatively junior in the organization in June 1940. According to the RSS, Golwalkar

Steered the organization for 33 years (1940-1973) as its guide and philosopher ...Guruji electrified the work to grow rapidly even in far-off places in Assam and Kerala. With his great erudition, he cogently propounded the historical and sociological background and the logic of the concept of Hindu *Rashtra*, which when he assumed responsibility as helmsman of the movement for Hindu resurgence represented by RSS, was just an empirical thought. (*Bunch of Thought*).

He penned one of the most controversial booklets on principles of Hindu nation and nationalism titled *We or Our Nationhood Defined*, which provided the philosophical basis to the concept of the Hindu Nation of RSS. Golwalkar in his lifetime had settled much of the ideological direction which the RSS was to take later. According to Gangadharan, "Golwalkar's aggressive belief in totalitarianism, casteism, Hinduisation, Racial ethics, anti-

minorityism and anti-democratic ideas came to be known as Golwalkarism” (*Golwalkarism* 45). His vision of “RSS inspired by one flag, one leader and one ideology is lighting the flame of Hindutva in each and every corner of this great land” (*Shri Guruji Samagar Darshan* , 11). It remained the pivot of the theory and practice of the organization in future. Golwalkar who headed the RSS during 1940-1973, produced the official version of its concept of Hindu nation and nationalism in a true savarkarite tradition. Golwalkar in his postulations of Hindu nation religiously followed Vinayak Damodar Savarkar who laid down the modern theory of Hindu rashtra or nation in a booklet titled, *Hindutva*, which appeared in 1929.

The appearance of *Hindutva* not only provided ideological foundations to organizations like RSS but was hailed as the most original and scholarly contribution to the Hindu nationalist ideology even by eminent Hindu leaders associated with the congress like B.S. Moonje, Lala Lajpat Rai, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and several others. One of such leaders, swami Shraddhanandawrote : it must have been one of those Vedic dawns indeed which inspired our seers with new truths that revealed to the author of *Hindutva* this ‘Mantra’ this definition of *Hindutva* (*Hindu Nationalism and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh*, 233).

This theory of Savarkar came to be known as Hindutva which restricted only to Hindus the right to be part of Indian nation which he described as an eternal Hindu nation. According to Savarkar's thesis, a Hindu:

is who looks upon the land that extends from Sindu to Sindu--from the Indus to the Seas--as the land of his forefathers--his Fatherland [Pitribhu], who inherits the blood of that race whose first discernible source could be traced to the Vedic Saptasindhus [Saptasindhus meant seven rivers presided by the river Sindhu; heavenly ordained land of the Aryans] and which on its onward march, assimilating much that was incorporated and ennobling much that was assimilated, has come to be known as the Hindu people, who has inherited and claims as his own the culture of that race as expressed chiefly in their common classical language Sanskrit and represented by a common history, a common literature, art and architecture, law and jurisprudence, rites and rituals, ceremonies and sacraments, fairs and festivals; and who above all, addresses this land, this Sindhusthan as his Holyland [Punyabhu], as the land of his prophets and seers, of his godmen and gurus, the land of piety and pilgrimage. These are the essentials of Hindutva--a common nation [Rashtra] a common race [Jati] and a common civilization [Sanskriti] (Hindutva, 115).

And these were only Hindus, hailing from the same Aryan race, belonging to a common civilization and by treating *Hindusthan* [land of the Hindus] as their fatherland and Holy Land, constituted the Indian Nation. On the contrary, Muslims and Christians remained out of this nationhood because they did not assimilate into Hindu cultural heritage or the Hindu religion. Savarkar argued that they

Cannot be recognized as Hindus; as since their adoption of the new cult they had ceased to own Hindu civilization [*Sanskriti*] as a whole. They belong, or feel that they belong to, a cultural unit altogether different from the Hindu one. Their heroes and their hero-worship , their fairs and their festivals, their ideals and their outlook on life, have now ceased to be common with ours (*Hindutva*, 100ff).

According to Dhanajay Keer, "Golwalkar regarded Savarkar's Hindutva as a great scientific book which fulfilled the need of a textbook on Hindu nationalism" (*Veer Savarkar* 527). He followed into Savarkar's footsteps while putting forward his ideas on the Hindu nation in a highly controversial booklet, *We or Our Nationhood Defined* (1939), which included a foreword by a prominent Congress leader and member of the Central Legislature, M. S. Aney. This book, indeed, determined the future direction of the concept of Hindu nationalism and nation as advocated by the RSS.

According to Golwalkar, India perennially had been a Hindu nation and for proving it, he, like Savarkar relied on epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata. They were not bothered that their reliance on a-historicity led them to claim diametrically different periods about the origin of Hindu nation in India. If in *Hindutva*, Savarkar claimed that 'forty centuries, if not more, had been at work to mold it as it is. (*Hindutva*,3) Golwalkar, in his treatise went on to claim that undoubtedly "we Hindus--have been in undisputed and undisturbed possession of this land for over 8 or even 10 thousand years before the land was invaded by any foreign race. (*We or Our Nationhood Defined*,6).

Surprisingly, Savarkar's claim that Hindu race originated 40 centuries ago and Golwalkar's claim of Hindus being in existence for last 80-100 centuries, did not match and were not based on historical facts, but these anomalies were of little consequence to these prophets of Hindu nationalism.

Golwalkar like Savarkar described India as 'Hindustha'. In fact, it was the conversion of Persian word 'Hindoostan' into Hindi; name given to India by ancient Persians. This fact was corroborated by even Swami Vivekananda agreed. It proves that 'Hindusthan' touted to be as an ancient country, but this name nowhere existed in the ancient Indian scriptures or documents. It was of much later origin.

Hindu Nationalist Ideology and Race Theories of Europe

There is close affinity between race-based theories of nationalism which developed in Europe between 18th and early 20th centuries and racial content of Hindu nationalism as propounded by Savarkar and Golwalkar. MS Golwalkar wrote two books outlining the Philosophy of Hindu religious nationalism and concepts outlined in these have been upheld and propagated in different ways by the Sangh Parivar in different forms. The books are *we or Our Nationhood Defined* and *A Bunch of Thoughts*. These were the same Face theories on which the whole discourse of Nazism and Fascism rested. A more thorough and in-depth study is necessary to demonstrate direct linkages between the two, but there is no denying the fact that when the race theories were making rounds in Europe, Savarkar, who led in the formation of ideology of Hindu nationalism, happened to be there. It was German poet and thinker, Friedrich von Schlegel (1772-1829), who contributed greatly to the popularity of ideas about racial superiority, purity of blood, purity of language, and national soul. He advanced the theory that 'races' were differentiated by language and that the older and the purer a language is, the older and purer is the race which speaks it. Thus, Schlegel became not only a formulator of a traditional cultural nationalism but a founder of a new romantic and pseudoscientific nationalism which was to flourish abundantly in the nineteenth century. Beside, Schlegel, contributed much to the popular cult of the ground under one's very feet and to the incorporation of it with the larger cult of nationality. He was the chief influence, for example, in making the Rhine a symbol not only for individuals who lived upon its banks but for the whole German nation, and the Rhine as a subject of nationalist literature was popularized by his poems. In fine, Friedrich von Schlegel brought to the fore the historic part of Germany, with its mythology, its traditions, its old songs and its old virtues (*The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism*, 108ff).

Another prominent contributor to this kind of construction of the concept of nationalism was, a French writer, Hippolyte Adolphe Taine (1828-1893). Taine, like Schlegel, amalgamated biological races with linguistic groups, and he surpassed Schlegel in attributing to the 'Aryan Race' and its several branches, superiority over Semitic and Chinese 'races'. He was, in fact, one of the foremost formulators of the Aryan myth. According to Taine, 'race, environment, epoch' are the factors which determine a nation (*The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism*, 183).

Another important contributor to the Race theory was again a Frenchman, Gobineau (1816-1882) who immensely contributed to the theory by advocating 'White Supremacy' and developed the racial theory of the Aryan master race in his book, *An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races*. Gobineau used it in support of the aristocracy against democracy. In the beginning of the 20th century, a Germanised Englishman, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, and his father-in-law Richard Wagner popularised the Aryan myth in Germany. This literature in defence of racism was anti-liberal, imperialist, and anti-Semitic (*A History of Political Theory*, 905)

Alfred Rosenberg further developed the Race theory into a philosophy of history in the early 1930s. According to him, world history was nothing but a struggle between Aryan or culture-creating race and all other lower breeds of mankind. Rosenberg claimed that Aryan race had originated from some point in the north and migrated to Egypt, India, Persia, Greece, and Rome, and had become the creator of all the ancient civilizations. He also argued that ancient cultures declined because Aryans interbred with lower races (*A History of Political Theory*, 906ff). In fact, both Savarkar and Golwalkar heavily borrowed from the Nazi theoretician Rosenberg's theory of 'Soul of the Race'. The idea of Hindutva developed by Savarkar and propagated by Golwalkar was directly linked to Rosenberg's philosophy. The great supporting pillars of Nazi racial theory were the postulations that 'blood' and 'soil' are the most important factors in shaping social evolution (*Political Philosophies*, 651). Hitler himself declared:

"All that is not race in this world is trash. (*Political Philosophies*, 652). For Savarkar, the two most important constituents of Hindu nation were Fatherland (Pitribhu) and blood of that race whose first discernible source could be traced to the Vedic Saptasindhus (*Hindutva* 115). This Fatherland of Hindus was the 'best nation of the Aryas' as distinguished from *Mlechasthan*, the land of the foreigners (*Hindutva*, 32).

Likewise, according to Golwalkar, Hindusthan, the land of great Hindu Race happened to be

an ideal piece of land deserving in every respect to be called a country, fulfilling all that the word should imply in the nation idea. Living in this country since pre-historic times, is the ancient race-the Hindus race, united by common traditions, memories of common glory and disaster, by similar historical, political, social, religious and other experience, living and evolving, under the same influences, a common culture, a common mother language, common customs, common aspirations. (*We or Our Nationhood defined*, 40).

It must have been more than a coincidence that English translation of Hitler's autobiography, *Mein Kampf* as *My Struggle* was available worldwide in 1938 (original edition in German language of *Mein Kampf* in two volumes had appeared in 1924-1926), outlining Nazi thesis of superiority of Aryan/German race. It was in the same year that Mussolini promulgated a

'Charter of Race declaring that Italians belonged to Aryan race that was ethnically homogenous and superior to others like Jews and Africans of Libya and Ethiopia (*Mussolini*, 221ff). And, in 1939, appeared Golwalkar's *We or Our Nationhood Defined*, which restricted right to nationality in a Hindu state only to Hindus who belonged to the Aryan Race.

A Need for A Paradigm shift for Effective Christian Witness

It is significant to note that many Indian theologies emerged because of the crisis of religious pluralism, cultural diversity, poverty and oppression, ethnic and religious struggles, and the struggle of nation-building. The emergence of Indian Christian theologies was a response to the desire of Indian Christians to reconcile their Christian faith with their cultural heritage and to address the specific challenges they faced in their context. As Indian Christians began to aware the challenges of witnessing Christ to Hindus they developed their own unique perspectives of Christian faith, based on Indian cultural, social, and religious backgrounds. Indian Christian theologians began to reflect on how to integrate their Christian faith with their Indian identity, traditions, and customs.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, there was a growing movement among Indian Christians to contextualize Christianity to the Indian context. This gave rise to different Indian Christian theologies, such as Dalit theology, Feminist theology, Tribal theology, and Inculturation theology. Dalit theology emerged as a response to the caste system in India, which often resulted in discrimination and oppression of lower-caste people. Feminist theology challenged patriarchal structures within the Church and society. Tribal theology emerged to incorporate the beliefs and practices of indigenous communities into Christianity. Inculturation theology focused on how to make Christianity more relevant to the Indian cultural context.

To effectively engage in Christian mission in the context of growing Hindutva and systematic and planned propaganda against Christian missions in varied forms in India demands a radical shift in its presentation of the gospel, theology of mission and understanding to play the prophetic role in the current situation.

The Response to Hindu Religious Nationalism

Christian mission practitioners need to focus on the barriers for effective mission practices in the wake of Hindutva and must develop appropriate alternatives in Hindutva context. . Jesus and Scripture do not change. His good news is eternal. His ecclesia is always fellowship, his body, his family.

Hindutva Ideology has effectively been promoted through various means of propaganda, which includes the dissemination of biased or misleading information to create a certain worldview among people through academic and popular writings and along with these, social media platforms are often used to spread propaganda in favor Hindutva ideology. It is noted that there is an increase in the production of Hindu apologetic literature aimed to attack the Christian faith at an academic level and challenge the foundational beliefs upon which Christianity is built. This aggressive fundamentalism indicates awakening among the educated caste Hindus about the possible threat Christianity might pose to their traditional religion. After the ascensions of BJP into power, there has been a focus on re-interpreting history the systematic attempts of the Hindu nationalists to re-write history in their image threatens to upset the very foundation of secular education in the country. For the last several decades, Hindutva groups have been active at the grassroots level with the message that the history taught in schools now, reflects a colonial past that does not do justice to the Hindu

heritage of the land, and accordingly, there is the need to re-write history from a Hindu perspective. According to Jesudas Athyal, “ following the ascension of a Hindu nationalist government to power at the Centre and in various states, the official machinery of the government is being used to write new books and popularize a Hindu-centric version of Indian history. These books “in the name of instilling patriotism and valor among Indians, spread falsehoods, treat mythological religious figures like actual historical figures and make absurd claims such as that the struggle for India’s freedom became a ‘religious war’ against Muslims”. (Christian Writing in Pluralistic Context).

It is worth noting that their critics of Hindutva ideology who argue that it is as a form of Hindu nationalism that promotes a narrow and exclusionary worldview. Critics of Hindutva ideology come from various backgrounds, including politicians, activists, scholars, and members of civil society. Some of the key critics of Hindutva ideology include:

The Indian National Congress (INC), which is one of the oldest and largest political parties in India, has been a vocal critic of Hindutva ideology. The party views Hindutva as a divisive and exclusionary ideology that promotes religious fundamentalism. Various leftist political parties in India, including the Communist Party of India (CPI) and Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M), have been critical of Hindutva ideology. They view it as a form of fascism that poses a threat to India's secular and democratic values. Human rights organizations: Human rights organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have criticized Hindutva ideology for promoting discrimination and violence against religious minorities in India, particularly Muslims and Christians. Academics and intellectuals: Many academics and intellectuals in India and abroad have criticized Hindutva ideology for promoting a narrow and exclusionary view of Indian culture and history. They argue that Hindutva ideology is based on a distorted understanding of India's past and that it promotes a culture of intolerance and violence. Civil society activists: Civil society activists in India, including feminists, environmentalists, and social justice advocates, have criticized Hindutva ideology for promoting regressive and discriminatory policies. They argue that Hindutva ideology is a threat to the rights of women, marginalized communities, and the environment.

Christian missions can challenge the Hindutva ideology through the different mediaby creating informative resources such as academic writings and using social media to spread accurate information about Christian beliefs and practices. Atul Aghamkar opines that “While being committed to the cause of missions, Christians also have a responsibility to question the foundations and logic of Hindutva before promoting the cause of Christian mission”.

A select number of Christian thinkers and theologians has been challenging and exposing the Hindutva ideology. Vishal Mangalwadi, John Dayal and others are significant.

Still, some efforts are urgently needed to respond to the intellectual attacks on Christian missions. Christian writers, theologians, mission leaders, and thinkers will need to come together to thoughtfully articulate our response to so many false allegations and attacks that are unfounded and have a minimal history as well as contemporary evidence. These will need to be carefully analyzed to expose their falsehood and biased perspectives. Moreover, public debates, dialogues, and discussions could be organized on digital media and, wherever possible, on a neutral platform in various cities. These may need to be handled carefully and with utmost care as these are sensitive issue.

Christian missions can advocate for the protection of religious freedom and human rights for all individuals, regardless of their faith. This can involve engaging with policymakers and civil society organizations to promote laws and policies that protect the rights of religious minorities.

While retaining our commitment to the Christian mission in India, the Church need to be prepared to respond to the challenge of Hindutva in a more robust and balanced way. This will require educating the Christian constituency in a strategic and timely manner. Relevant information and documents, as well as other resources, should be provided for them to be adequately informed about the reality of such fundamental forces. The lack of relevant information and proper awareness about these challenges keeps the Church inactive and passive. At the national and regional levels, such awareness seminars should be organized to adequately inform the Christian constituency about this dangerous trend that is drastically affecting Christian life and ministries in India.

The Church in India must be properly and systematically equipped with skills, tools, and other means to handle these challenges effectively. Such equipping will require providing social, legal, and practical knowledge and skills. Various subject experts could be brought together to provide their legal and social insights on how to handle such legal, social, and political issues. Along with the Christian resources and resource people, various secular and neutral resources and resource people from the temporal field should be invited. Their specialized knowledge, experience, and perspectives should be utilized to equip the Christian constituency in India. Further it is significant to note that Hindus are not against the Christian gospel but the missionary approaches of Christians which are more often branded as western or colonized.

So relevant missionary approaches need to be introduced to make the Christian gospel more meaningful to the people of India. Christian missions in India are increasingly focused on building relationships with people from different religious and social backgrounds, promoting active engagement and interfaith dialogue. Christian missions can initiate and participate in interfaith dialogues with Hindu leaders and followers to foster mutual understanding and respect. This can help to dispel stereotypes and misconceptions about Christianity and create an environment of peaceful coexistence and understanding. Christian missions can highlight the importance of social justice and equality, which are core values of Christianity. By actively engaging in social and humanitarian work, such as providing education, healthcare, and relief services to marginalized communities, Christian missions can demonstrate the positive impact of Christian faith on society and advocating for social justice and equality.

Technology and Media

Technology and media are changing the way people communicate and access information. According to Global Social Media statistics, Global internet users have climbed to 4.95 billion at the start of 2022, with internet penetrations now standing at 62.5 percent of the world's total population. Data show that internet users have grown by 192 million (+ 4.0 percent) over the past year. There were 658.0 million internet users in India in January 2022. India's internet penetration rate stood at 47.0 percent of the total population at the start of 2022. Kepios analysis indicates that internet users in India increased by 34 million(+5.4 percent) between 2021 and 2022. There are 4.62 billion social media users around the world

in January 2022. This figure is equal to 58.4 percent of the world's total population. And there were 467.0 million social media users in India in January 2022. The number of social media users in India at the start of 202 was equivalent to 33.4 percent of the total population, but it is important to note that social media users may not represent unique individuals. Kepios analysis reveals that social media users in India increased by 19 million (+4.2 percent) between 2021 and 2022. The people are online and searching for the answers. People are googling for answers, for comfort, for truth, for healing, for hope. According to top 101 theological questions in 2022 according to google, who is Jesus is asked 2, 740,000 in a month. So Christian missions need to use digital media to reach out to the people in urban communities and need to adapt new technologies and methods of communication to reach the urban Hindus.

Conclusion

Christians, we must stand on Biblical principles and know what the Bible teaches us to respond to such atrocities and attacks. Studying and using Biblical insights for times like this is the need of the hour. Comprehensive and in-depth Biblical teachings should be made available to pastors and leaders to equip their congregations to face and respond to such challenges. When responding to Hindutva ideology in India, Christian missions can adopt various approaches: Promote dialogue and understanding: Engage in open and respectful discussions with individuals who hold Hindutva beliefs. Seek common ground, highlight shared values, and encourage empathy and understanding. Promote interfaith dialogue to foster harmony and bridge gaps between different communities. Emphasize Common Values: Highlight the shared values of compassion, love, and service that are present in both Christianity and Hinduism. By focusing on these shared ideals, Christian missions can help create a common ground for dialogue and collaboration, emphasizing that the goal is the well-being and upliftment of society. Promote educational initiatives that foster interfaith understanding and appreciation of different religious traditions. Encouraging interfaith dialogue, seminars, and workshops can help dispel misconceptions and promote religious harmony and coexistence. Focus on Social Services. Place greater emphasis on humanitarian and social service initiatives that benefit all members of society, regardless of their religious affiliation. By actively addressing the needs of the marginalized and disadvantaged, Christian missions can demonstrate their commitment to improving society, rather than solely focusing on conversion efforts. Respect Local Culture and Customs. Christian missions can demonstrate respect for local culture and customs by incorporating elements of Indian traditions into their worship and practices. This can help alleviate concerns that Christianity is a foreign import that threatens local identity. Ethical Conversion Practices: Ensure that conversion activities adhere to ethical standards and respect the rights and choices of individuals. Transparency, honesty, and informed consent should be integral to any conversion efforts, avoiding any perception of force, coercion, or inducement. Advocacy and Solidarity. Engage in advocacy efforts to promote religious freedom and the rights of minority communities in India. By standing in solidarity with marginalized groups and promoting equal rights for all, Christian missions can contribute to a more inclusive and tolerant society. It is important to note that the responses to Hindutva ideology may vary depending on the specific context and the nature of relationships between Christian missions and local communities. Flexibility, respect, and understanding are key principles that can guide Christian missions in their engagement with Hindutva ideology while staying true to their mission of spreading the message of Christ. Remember that engaging with Hindutva ideology requires a long-term approach and sustained efforts.

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