



Research article

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CRYPTO CHRISTIANITY AS A VIABLE MISSION PRACTICE IN THE CONTEXT OF INDIA'S SAFFRON SURGE: A MISSIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT



Crypto Christianity has emerged as a credible reaction to India's anti-conversion legislation. The question is whether there is a way to be a Christian in trying situations without publicly expressing one's loyalty to Christ, writes Shashank Joshi any choose to keep their formal religious status while privately professing their religion. Christianity in India has often been alleged of being vindictive or Christ-less in nature. There is a need for cultural relevance in Missionaries of Christ in today's Indian missions. A Bible-based contextual labouring is necessary for the spread of the gospel in India

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1.1 Introduction

In a democratic country, the term "crypto-Christians" or "hidden Christians" may not be frequently used. However, the term is widely used around the world, particularly in countries and cultures that restrict citizens' religious loyalty. The increased use of the term Crypto or secret Christians in India is evidence of the country's shift away from its democratic and secular image. Growing religious intolerance and fanaticism are threatening the country's long-standing cultural harmony. To avoid the dangers, followers are obliged to practise as clandestine or crypto Christians.

Hence, the phrase crypto-Christians refers to people who allegedly converted to Christianity, either freely or by coercion, but then kept their Christian beliefs and practises hidden. While the expression crypto meaning "in place of" proclaims its meaning. The question to consider is whether there is a way to be a Christian in trying situations without publicly expressing one's loyalty to Christ. Are they then confessors or apostates? This study thus aims to uncover missiological praxis in the midst of fundamentalist circumstances and the crypto -Christian dilemma.

David B. Barret coined the neologism with the first edition of the World Christian Encyclopaedia to describe the 70 million people (in 1980), the majority of whom were in Communist countries, who quietly and secretly confessed Jesus as Lord, treasured the Bible as their Holy Scriptures, and worshipped in the way of Christ, but did not openly or publicly profess their Christian faith. His choice of term was 'crypto-Christians', defined in the glossary of the second edition as "secret believers, hidden Christians, usually known to churches but not to state or secular or non-Christian religious society."¹ As a result, the term crypto-Christians is used to describe people whose true religious beliefs and practises differ from their formal religious affiliation and who frequently try to conceal this fact from the general public.

In communist and Middle Eastern countries around the world, secret Christian followers have been found. However, even in India, there are many secret Christians who follow Jesus in secret for fear of being ostracised from their families and community. In the

¹John Bonk, *Between past and future: Evangelical Mission entering the twenty-first Century*, Evangelical Missiological Society Series No. 10 (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2003), 263.



context of India's *Hindutva* goal, this research examines privately professing Christianity as a viable missiological approach.

2.1 The Saffron Surge

The saffron surge can be traced back to the Hindu Mahasabha's *shuddhi* (cleaning) campaign in India, which eventually became known as the Bhartiya Janata Party. *Hindusthan* was claimed by the movement.² *Hindutva* Nationalism, according to Selvam Roberston, includes choiceless religious, civilizational, and cultural identities.³ Saffron is cherished in Indian culture. Saffron is worn by Hindu saints and monks as a symbol of purity. Saffron is used on the upper part of India's national flag as a symbol of sacrifice and courage. The *Hindutva* agenda, on the other hand, has somehow transformed the calm meaning of saffron into one of fear and terror. While India is not at war with other countries, the saffron agenda has undoubtedly started a cultural war. India's secular democratic image has been significantly marred by the blending of politics and religion, and the country is headed toward a powerful majoritarian religiously driven nationalist movement.

India has drifted away from the paths of secularism and communal harmony since independence, veering toward factionalism and religious politicisation. Despite the fact that this violates the constitutional right to freedom of religion, *Hindu rashtrawadis'* political aim has openly crushed India's secular democratic façade. In India, the *Hindutva* agenda has taken the shape of *Hindutva* agitation against minorities. The religious-political agenda is guided by the Bhartiya Janata Party and the alliance.

M T Cherian correctly observes this in his book that the majority religion and its keepers have been instilling fear among the common mass about the minority become stronger and mightier through conversion. This in turn has to a great extent created a rift between communities. Political parties have resorted to the use of religious symbols and mass mobilisation to capture the political frontiers of the nation. Religious actions of replacing minority worship places, constitutional amendments etc is a feather in the cap for the majority religion but it has affected the Indian secular fabric and the secular constitution.⁴ He

²Cherian, *Hindutva Agenda and Minority Rights: A Christian Response*, 183.

³Selvam Robertson, "Christian Identity and Witness in the Context of Present-Day *Hindutva* Nationalism" *Doon Theological Journal* 16/ 1-2 (March & September 2019), 101.

⁴Cherian, *Hindutva Agenda and Minority Rights: A Christian Response...*,232.



calls the states ruled by the majority party as “the experiment laboratories of Hindutva where the minority communities are harassed and freedom of religions is curtailed. It is following the fascist line of thought, and is trying to eliminate the ones who are not with them.”⁵

A new phrase, 'developmental Hindutva,' has moved to the forefront in the past few years. However, due to Hindutva ideology's political preferences, the balancing of progress and Hindutva is debatable. The Ideology, whether disguised as political or religious, is upsetting and distressing. It does definitely communalize India's political realm due to Hindutva's underlying basic spark i.e. "to be Indian is to be Hindu." In his seminal treatise *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?*, published in 1923, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar propagated the idea and is hence considered the father of the *Hindutva* movement.⁶ We acquire a clearer understanding of how the Hindutva ideology has affected modern understanding among religious extremists and its larger effect even among secular Hindus by tracking its historical evolution.

3.1 The Milieu of Secret Christians in India

It is critical to investigate the reasons behind the existence of covert Christians all over the world. The number of covertly professing Christians is increasing around the world, particularly in the Middle East and Southeast Asia. Over time, the gospel has reached unreachable locations through numerous means. With the growth of technology and the usage of the internet as a beneficial tool, it has made advances into previously unreachable areas. A special mention of India is unavoidable. India is a multi-religious country with different religious traditions. However, Hinduism, the majority faith, frequently plays a big brother role in society, state, and politics, despite its claims to be the country's "official religion."

With the rise of ideology and the incorporation of religion into active politics, religion has increasingly become an effective instrument in the hands of political parties seeking to build a voter base. As a result, Hindu fundamentalist groups posing as "religious police" are actually the political arm of political parties in the country who utilise religion to unite Hindus by instilling nationalistic impulses in them. Thus, in spirit more than in letter,

⁵Cherian, *Hindutva Agenda and Minority Rights: A Christian Response*, 232.

⁶ Savarkar, Vinayak Damodar, *Hindutva: Who Is a Hindu?* 5th ed, (Bombay: Veer Savarkar Prakashan, 1969).



Hindutva, Hindu Fundamentalism, and Hindu Nationalism are all part of this hidden political goal.

According to Open Doors, a global watch list that rates the dynamics of persecution, India is the 10th most hazardous country for violent and widespread persecution.⁷ Because of the widespread violence and anti-conversion legislation, Crypto Christianity has emerged as a credible reaction to India's saffron movement.

In recent years, Hindu fundamentalism has taken aim at Christianity's extremism, particularly that of Jesus and his early followers. *Hindutva* ideologists say that Jesus' message is fundamentalist and has a fascist, racial, economic, and political goal similar to *Hindutva's*. The Jewish nation's *Rashtravad* (Nation), *Jathivad* (Jewish Race), and *Samrajyavad* (Imperial Opposition) are viewed as precedents for the Hindutva Agenda. Hence Indian Christians are questioned on their dual faced attitude. Simon Samuel remarks:

Jesus is the way to this new inclusive community of egalitarian equals without dividing walls of any kind. This is the fundamentalism of this community, for it was the fundamentalism of Jesus himself who is the Messiah and the Lord of this community. He is the truth and life of this community. It is a new community formed in the place of old communities that drew lines between peoples and nations. It is an inclusive community that invites all, Jews and gentile, male and female, rich and poor, people from far and near, present and future. It excludes those who oppose this community's vision of creating one new human in Christ.

Modern attempts to link early Christian fundamentalism to various shades of *Hindutva* fundamentalism today are deceptive, as Jesus and his disciples' fundamentalism was distinct in its building of a new humanity free of walls of separation and political ambition. Modern *Hindutva* supporters have denigrated them by imposing the doctrine through force and persecution. Persecution, mob lynching, and attacks by Hindu extremist groups have been documented in Indian media over the years and continue to do so now.

⁷<https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/stories/the-10-most-dangerous-places-for-christians/>, Accessed on 10 March 2021.



There are two sides of crypto-Christianity that must be identified here from a political perspective:

1. Those whose identity is kept hidden, such that most family members are unaware that there is a Christian in the family.

2. Those whose true identity is known - they have Christian names, get baptism, and attend church, yet their official documents identify them as Hindus. This applies to a sizable proportion of people. As a result, it may not be true that Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu have a low number of Christians. The question is, who exactly are crypto? Those who confess in private or those who confess but keep it hidden from the authorities.

4.1 Identifying Possibilities for Crypto Christians in India

Because of its fundamentals and claims, non-Christians in India frequently regard Christianity as an exclusive religion. In India, there is no way to identify Crypto Christians unless on a personal basis. The clandestine nature of the situation precludes the creation of a database or a survey. It does, however, open the way for a missiological theology. The role of the mission theologian is to translate the gospel message. Missiological theology is doing theology in everyday life: identifying the message of the Word of God to the world. The problem is pointed out by the mission theologian, or vice versa.⁸ Several factors point to the existence of crypto Christians in India.

4.1.1 Rules concerning Apostasy in religious systems

Apostasy is the formal disaffiliation from or abandonment or renunciation of a religion⁹ by a person and the one committing apostasy is called an apostate. Apostasy is punishable by death, imprisonment, fines, flogging, detention, child custody loss, marriage annulment, and other means that vary by country. Although Hinduism in India has no idea of heresy or apostasy, there is significant social pressure against it. Hindu extremist groups, following the Arya Samaj's *Shudhi* manifesto, frequently force people to convert back to Hinduism from

⁸Paul G Hiebert & Tite Tienou, "Missions and the doing of Theology," in *The urban face of mission*, edited by Manuel Ortiz and Susan S. Baker (New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2002), 94

⁹https://www.jlsrjournal.in/volume-2-issue-2/apostasy-under-personal-laws-in-india-by-hardik-bansal-srajan-tyagi/#_ftn9, Accessed on 10 March 2021.



their newfound faith.¹⁰ The *gharvapsi* (Homecoming) movement in India is indicative of how severely apostasy is taken in India.

Apostasy laws are harsh all around the world, including in India. Apostates are frequently removed from the community and condemned harshly. Dissidents are excommunicated in other religious traditions as well. As a result, many people keep their new found faith a secret, rather than making them public in order to avoid harassment from inside their families, societies, and communities.

If an apostate does not return to his or her former religion, he or she is accused of blasphemy. As a result, the 10/40 window has tight legal ramifications. Legal consequences in Islamic countries include both religious and legal sanctions and/or punishments, including execution. According to the World Atlas, India is rated fifth among countries that prohibit apostasy.¹¹ As a defence strategy against legal and political punishment, apostasy rules require people to be enigmatic about their religious beliefs.

4.1.2 Economic Consequences

A legal change of religion in India means that believers are no longer eligible for government benefits, social programmes, or educational reservations. As a result of state-level anti-conversion laws, the condition of Christians in India has changed considerably. While it is still controversial in India whether a person's initial caste changes as a result of religious conversion.

In India, anti-conversion legislation is referred to as "freedom of religion legislation." The following states now have the same implementation.

- (i) Odisha (1967),
- (ii) Madhya Pradesh (1968),
- (iii) Arunachal Pradesh (1978),
- (iv) Chhattisgarh (2000 and 2006),

¹⁰M. T. Cherian, *Hindutva Agenda and Minority Rights: A Christian Response* (Bangalore: Centre for Contemporary Christianity, 2007), 168.

¹¹ World Atlas, "Countries Where Apostasy Is Illegal - World Atlas." www.worldatlas.com, December 13, 2018. <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/countries-where-apostasy-is-illegal.html>.



- (v) Gujarat (2003),
- (vi) Himachal Pradesh (2006 and 2019),
- (vii) Jharkhand (2017) and
- (viii) Uttarakhand (2018).¹²

While the title 'freedom of religion laws' is aesthetically secular and democratic, the law in its current form is a complete façade. While economic sanctions are not explicitly stated in the statutes, converts lose access to economic advantages from the central or state governments because benefit allocation in India is based on religion rather than citizenship. Loss of economic gains adds to citizens' financial troubles in India, where poverty is a big worry. As a result, many Christians choose to keep their formal religious status while privately professing their religion.

4.1.3 Fear of severed family ties

Regardless of age, transformations, religious and political opinions, the family is the longest-surviving institution in India or anywhere. Indian families and Indian culture are built on three pillars: loyalty, integrity, and unity. Indians learn the first letters of collectivism from their families, surrendering individualism for the greater good. The Indian family system emphasises extended family and kinship. Though India is breaking apart into nuclear families in modern times, the joint family system has remained the backbone of the Indian family system. Families have often severed ties with converts as a result of conversion. As a result, many people keep their religious affiliation hidden in order to maintain the safety and sanctity of their families.

4.1.4 Europeanization or Western religion argument

In India, Christianity is regarded as a foreign religion, and Hindu fundamentalist organisations such as the VHP, RSS, and Bajrang Dal utilise it as a tool to expel Christians from Indian society. Christianity initially arrived in India in the first century. Through medical aid, education, shelters, and care for the destitute and needy, Christianity contributed greatly to the welfare and progress of modern India. By misinterpreting their goal to generate

¹²<https://www.indiatoday.in/news-analysis/story/anti-conversion-laws-in-india-states-religious-conversion-1752402-2020-12-23>, Accessed on 08th March 2021.



religious intolerance, today's Hindu extremists aim to undermine Christianity's humanitarian aspect as well as its social activities.

The length of this paper prevents us from answering the question of whether Christianity is a Western religion. "St. Thomas came to India when many of the countries of Europe had not yet become Christian," remarked India's first president, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, "therefore those Indians who trace their Christianity to him have a longer history and a greater ancestry than Christians of many of the European countries."¹³ However, in light of the emergence of religious extremism, these considerations prompt us to consider the place of secularism in India today and in the context of Indian political culture, which appears to be compromised and steadily deteriorating.

However, doubts about the Aryan Race, which most likely invaded or migrated to India, counter the western religion question. Golwalkar, on the other hand, flatly disputes that Hindus are migrants or invaders, insisting that they have always been children of the land.¹⁴

5.1 A Review of Proposed Methods in the Context of the Saffron Surge

Several scholars have previously sought to address the topic of mission praxis in the context of the saffron surge. Famous theologians, missiologists, and church leaders have offered various missiological approaches. The scope of this study does not provide for a comprehensive examination of all approaches. This work, on the other hand, attempts to conduct foundational research on the approaches.

5.1.1 Churchless Christianity

It is a proposed alternative to failed indigenization process. Christianity in India has often been alleged of being vindictive or Christ-less in nature apparent in the writings of Swami Vivekananda¹⁵, Mahatma Gandhi¹⁶ etc... 'Churchless-Christ' is a proposed alternative for the Christologizing process in India. A claim for churchless Christianity raises several questions. Foremost being the necessity to accept the name "Christian" in order to belong to Christ.

¹³Johnson, Kuriapilly, "Through the pages of the History" <http://www.thuruthoorsinaimount.com/history.html> (20 June 2013).

¹⁴Madhav Sadasiv Golwalkar, *We our Nationhood Defined* (Nagpur: Bharath Publications, 1939), 9.

¹⁵Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 8th Mayavati Memorial ed. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1972), IV:32-33.

¹⁶M. K. Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (Delhi: Publications Division, Government of India, 1958-2001), 476.



Would Christ out of the Church be no Christ at all? A non-Christian who comes to Christ shouldn't necessarily accept Christ as Saviour and be baptized to unite with the visible Church. The need would be to not limit Christ to the four walls of the Church. The church alone isn't to interpret Christ. Great many thinkers and citizens in India have not criticized Christ but the church/Christians of Christ for various reasons. Mahatma Gandhi said, "I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ."¹⁷ Ralph Winter commenting on the book "Churchless Christianity" states:

"... is the results of a scientific survey of the largest city in Southern India, formerly called Madras, and today known as Chennai. It gives the evidence that masses of Hindus have a high regard for Jesus Christ, and about 25% of that city of millions of people have given up their idols and are daily Bible-reading followers of Christ. The surprise is that the majority of these followers of Christ study the Bible and worship at the home level, continue to associate within the Hindu social sphere, and do not routinely associate with the somewhat "Western" Christian churches. That is why the book is entitled Churchless Christianity"¹⁸

Timothy C Tennent notes, "Distorted associations with the terms "church" and "Christianity" is not limited to India, nor is the presence of non-baptized followers of Jesus who do not identify with the visible church. This has also been observed throughout the Muslim world."¹⁹ Churchless Christianity considers the church and unchurched populations, which are divided into four categories: actively church, slightly church, purely unchurched, and de-church. The unchurched have a higher percentage than the church. However, the number of churchless people who become Christ-less is high, therefore this cannot be guaranteed.

5.1.2 Christ-ized Hinduism

Herbert E. Hofer, proposed the Christ-ized Hinduism as a missiological strategy. This strategy is seen as a tenet of Churchless Christianity itself. For this purpose he calls converts *Jesu bhakt* meaning 'devotees of Jesus' than Christians and Christ being the '*ishta devata*' or chosen deity. He calls these Churchless Christians as "the other sheep," referring to John

¹⁷<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/22155-i-like-your-christ-i-do-not-like-your-christians>, Accessed on 13 March 2021.

¹⁸http://www.foundationcourse.org/uploads/documents/reader/39_Churchless_Christianity.pdf, Accessed on 13 March 2021.

¹⁹Christianity, <http://www.reclaimingthemind.org/papers/ets/2005/Tennent/Tennent.html>, 1-12, Accessed on 12 March 2021. h 2021.



10:14-16; "I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me... And I have **other** sheep that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd."²⁰

He says:

Some might argue that this [the “smothering embrace of Hinduism”] is the danger with the ishta devata strategy I am proposing. It will lead not to an indigenous Christianity but to a Christianized Hinduism. Perhaps more accurately we should say a Christ-ized Hinduism. I would suggest that really both are the same, and therefore we should not worry about it. We do not want to change the culture or the religious genius of India. We simply want to bring Christ and His Gospel into the center of it.²¹

Hofer, on the other hand, has been chastised by critics who feel it would lead to a conversion to Christianized Hinduism rather than indigenous Christianity. He may have objected to Historical Christianity as a voice of the captive Christ in the Indian church, but he is theologically inadequate, much alone missiologically apt.

5.1.3 Christ Centred Secular Fellowship minus baptism

Famous Indian theologian M.M. Thomas coined the concept of "Christ-centred secular fellowship" outside the Church. He advocates for the formation of a Christ-centred fellowship of faith and ethics within the Hindu religious community that is non-institutional and non-structural. As a result, he rejects baptism and speaks of a new humanity that belongs to Jesus but is apart from the Church.²²

Manilal Parekh, E. Stanley Jones, Keshab Chandra Sen, Kaj Baago, and Bernard Lucas were among others who had a similar idea of following Christ without baptism. However, while many within other religious systems follow this level of commitment to Christ, this approach is typically considered theologically inadequate and has been rejected by mainstream Christianity. The behaviour of unbaptized Christians who are not under church authority is not acknowledged as normative ecclesiology. With the publication of

²⁰Herbert Hofer, *Churchless Christianity* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2001), 96.

²¹Hofer, *Churchless Christianity*, xii.

²²M. M. Thomas, *Salvation and Humanisation*, (Madras: CLS, 1971), 13,38



Leslie Newbigin's book "The Finality of Christ," which viewed M. M. Thomas' approach as a deviant ecclesiology, the approach sparked a major discussion in the Indian church.²³

M. M Thomas calls this community, "The new humanity." In the words of M. M. Thomas, "The new humanity in Christ, that is, the humanity which responds in faith and receives the liberation of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, transcends the church."²⁴ As a result, he believes that baptism should be considered a sacramental privilege rather than a requirement for membership in the Christian community. Lesslie Newbigin expresses similar sentiments.

5.1.4 Accept Baptism without Socio-Cultural Change

Donald McGavran, Brahmabhandav Upadhyay, Manilal C. Parekh, Narayan Vamana Tilak, and Pandita Ramabai were among those who accepted baptism (in letter or practise) but campaigned to keep their original social and cultural values.²⁵ Given the 'Western religion' charge levelled against Christianity in India, such a tactic is critical and timely. Furthermore, the cultural crisis precipitated by the church's acceptance of western standards and values as a way of relief has been widely condemned. Many prominent Indians, like Mahatma Gandhi, Keshub Chunder Sen, and others, who respected Christ's teachings, resisted baptism since it signified a shift in culture and community. Conversion and baptism are now considered as denationalisation in the current environment.

6.1 Crypto Christianity as a Viable Missiological Approach

More inventive ideas and procedures that are consistent with Christian theology must be created and implemented in order to successfully convey the Christian gospel in the Indian setting. However, this would imply the abandonment of traditional techniques and/or the adoption of a more current/relevant missiological approach based on extensive research and discussion.

In the city of Madurai (known as the city of temples) in Tamil Nadu, an outreach group by a mission organization wrote on the street walls this slogan, "*Jesus is the answer.*" However, the next day, these words were found written underneath possibly by the Hindus,

²³Lesslie Newbigin, *The Finality of Christ*. (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1969) 96.

²⁴M M Thomas, *Some Theological Dialogues* (Madras: CLS, 1977), 112.

²⁵Joseph Mattam, *Indian attempts towards a Solution to the Problem of Conversion...*, 117-120



"*What is the question?*"²⁶ The de-contextualized presentation of the gospel has frequently resulted in rejection and evasion of the gospel. This is due to India's unique cultural landscape. While business tycoons and multinational corporations have adapted their products and services to suit the Indian culture (e.g. McAloo veg burgers, veg tikkas, etc...instead of non-veg burgers and so on...), Christians continue to lag behind in the task of becoming a part of the culture rather than an outsider. The Christian failure to understand the Hindu mind and culture is the cause of friction.

In India, the Christian church and its cultural meanings are linked. Due to a political history of oppression under western countries, the term church in India bears significant connotations such as "western culture," "foreignness," "colonialism," "western religion," and so on. In this context, Hindu extremist groups believe that Hindustan is for Hindus, and that Christians must travel to Israel, the birthplace of Christianity. In today's Indian missions, there is a need for cultural relevance.

Jesus declares in Matthew 16:18, "On this rock I will build my church." Jesus does not refer to the church as an institutional entity or a physical structure. The Church, as used by Jesus, is not always a visible community. Rather than a "publicly confessing congregation," the Greek word *ἐκκλησία* means "public assembly." The public declaration of a newfound loyalty to God does not imply that the newfound faith be professed in the original religious group. When faced with a choice between the two, the call is to do so. On this crucial point, we must allow Scripture and history to guide us.

Indian mission lies in the debris of contextualization, inculturation and acculturation. Amidst debates, a Bible based contextual labouring is necessary for the spread of the gospel in India. The famous statement of Sadhu Sunder Singh describes what contextualization is. He said, "It is giving the water of life in Indian cup."²⁷ There are many *jatis* in India each being a cup, that needs the water of life in the Indian cup. Despite the fact that the gospel is not a cultural construct, it is applicable and translatable to all cultures, it is critical to learn and engage cultures. Because there is a noticeable dearth of instruction on culture and

²⁶Dayanand Bharati, *Living Water and Indian Bowl* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2001), 2.

²⁷Cyril J. Davey, *The Yellow Robe* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1957), 43.



associated themes in the church and theological institutions, Indian Christians are nonetheless equipped to deal with cultural issues.

However, it is critical that we do not depart from Biblical principles in our endeavours to "become all things to all men" when developing a mission strategy. Paul describes the boundaries of the flexibility he wields in his mission strategy in 1 Corinthians 9: 9-13. It's worth noting that the term 'like' is used in verse 20. This is an open call to contextual labour, but only within the Christian Gospel's bounds and without compromise. Are we, as Indians, to fight to maintain our nation's culture rather than allowing western civilization to flourish? There is also a requirement for authentic life. The church must portray the mind and nature of Christ in the society in order that people would not become vindictive and haters of the Christian faith.

When looking back at previous missiological techniques, the thin line that separates theological soundness from theological deficiency is frequently crossed, resulting in orthodoxy or unorthodoxy. While the proposed techniques were unusual and camouflaged fundamentalist aggressiveness, they went against Christianity's essential doctrines. Crypto Christianity tries to follow everything of the Bible's foundations, excluding the public confession." Doesn't crypto Christianity fail if it doesn't address the public profession of Christ?" This is the question that stands out.

7.1 Conclusion

In modern India, there has been a concerted effort to portray Christianity as a western agent bent on destroying Indian religion and culture. The conversions are considered as a threat to the country's stability. We are obliged to wonder why, despite its claims to democratic and constitutional rights, Indian society does not look past religious and ideological differences.²⁸ As a result, it creates a large field of play for clandestine Christians.

Can we conclude that the number of hidden converts in India has increased in light of these circumstances? While various attempts have been made to contextualise the gospel in Indian missions, there is an urgent need in theological and missiological realms to incarnate the gospel in culturally relevant ways due to three crucial aspects, making it more acceptable

²⁸Thomas M John, "Recent violence in India and scripts of Nationalism" *ABS Journal of Theology* 8/1 (June 2020), 36.



to the Indian masses. As a result, the Christian faith in India would be on par with other religious traditions, rather than estranged as it is in the West. This will be beneficial to the current secret Christians, who will be able to freely confess their faith in Christ.

However, it's worth considering whether it's possible to openly declare loyalty to Jesus if we know the consequences would be violent and terrible. Fearing persecution from the Romans and Jews, the disciples went into hiding, according to the Bible. These defence systems may appear cowardly, but they were undoubtedly prudent. So, if someone chooses to keep their religious affiliation hidden, would that make them a phoney Christian? The orthodox and liberal approaches to the crypto Christian argument have been used. The possibility of the orthodox group holding strong in the face of violent extremist conditions is something to consider.

Crypto Christianity has emerged as a response to India's anti-conversion legislations, *Hindutva* movement and religious fundamentalism/fanaticism. Is it possible to be a Christian in difficult circumstances without openly professing one's allegiance to Christ? It is crucial that the Indian church find a way to stand up and identify themselves as sons and daughters of the country rather than as foreigners even though many individuals wish to preserve their legal religious status while secretly professing their beliefs. The church needs to preserve its Indian identity while also coming up with new ideas on how to be nation builders.

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