THE IMPACT OF RELIGIOUS CONVERSION ON CULTURAL IDENTITY
CONVERSION STORY OF SOUTH AFRICAN ANGLICAN INDIAN CHRISTIANS

By

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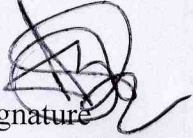In the subject

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I declare that **THE IMPACT OF RELIGIOUS CONVERSION ON CULTURAL IDENTITY –
CONVERSION STORY OF SOUTH AFRICAN ANGLICAN INDIAN CHRISTIANS** is my own
work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted, have been indicated and
acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signature

Rev A A John

Date – 23rd February 2007

Acknowledgements

Summary

The impact of religious conversion on cultural identity is a study of conversion story of South African Indian Anglican Christians rooted in the oppressive history of casteism in India and Racism in South Africa.

This study has used multi discipline approach using various schools of human sciences and broader theological framework in dealing with moral and ethical issues. This study defends the religious conversions and highlights the impact it has made on cultural identity of converts from *social, economic, psychological and spiritual perspectives.*

While highlighting the positive impact of religious conversion on cultural identity this study has also pointed out some ambiguities attached to this process.

This study looks into the possibilities of Native and Indian Christians working together to create a healing culture in South Africa. An attempt is made to point out the interrelatedness of the experiences of suffering of Native Christians and Indian Christians from indentured backgrounds in South Africa.

This study does not cover disparity issues between native Africans and the Indian Community in South Africa. However, an attempt is made to encourage Indian Christians in South Africa to connect with the pain and pathos of poor communities in South Africa. This study encourages the Indian Christians in South Africa to read Dalit theology and get involved with Black theologians in formulating appropriate mission praxis for their mission and ministry in post apartheid South Africa.

This study concludes on a positive note and hope based on my eight years of ministry in Lenasia. During my ministry I had experienced that South African Anglican Indian Christians and native Christians have the developing ability and capacity to become a spiritual resource in building a transformed and transforming society in South Africa. I could see in them a reconciled 'wounded healers' and for me this is a powerful impact of religious conversion on their cultural identity. 'Victims' now have the capacity to act as 'Wounded Healers'.

The key words in this thesis are: *conversion, Indian Christians, Native Christians, culture, identity, motivation, caste, racism, dalit theology, black theology, and wounded healers.*

CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

The Impact of Religious Conversion on Cultural Identity
Conversion Story of South African Indian Anglican Christians

1.1 Preamble

The impact of religious conversion on the cultural identity is a study of the conversion story of the South African Indian Anglican Christians rooted in the oppressive history of casteism in India and Racism in South Africa. In and through conversion they experienced liberation and transformation. This study, while tracing the history of the South African Indian Christians' conversion stories rooted in the Indian history, has also highlighted the impact it has made on their cultural identity.

It is a study of depressed communities who had restored their selfhood through conversion into the Christian faith. The impact of religious conversion on cultural identity in this study is realized in the formation of a rich type of identity experience and the growing spiritual capacity of converts in dealing with their pain and suffering of the past through Christian teachings. The impact of religious conversion on cultural identity is also seen in the formation of a new religio-culture and a new ethnic identity of converts.

The emphasis in this thesis is on 'mass conversions' or 'group conversions' of the people known as 'untouchable' and 'outcaste'. I have used the term 'depressed communities' in this study for these people whose history in rooted in the Hindu caste system as 'untouchables' or 'outcaste'. The term 'oppressed' is used to narrate the plight of these depressed people in the Hindu caste structure and racism in South Africa.

These degrading terms 'untouchable' and 'outcaste' were changed by the British Administration calling them as the 'depressed classes' in 1919. Gandhi gave them the name 'Harijan' (people of God). But the Harijan was not accepted by Dr. Ambedkar (a low caste Hindu and father of Indian constitution) who proposed the term describing these people as the 'protestant Hindu' and demanded a separate electorate for these 200 million depressed people. In 1935, British government defined these people as the

'Scheduled Caste'. And it was during the 1970s the term 'Dalit' was coined by Dalit Panther Movement in Maharashtra and therefore they are now recognized by many as 'Dalit People'.

Since most of the converts share the common experience of depressed backgrounds, this thesis records the conversion story of South African Indian Anglican Christians as a collective story. It is the story of the masses from depressed backgrounds that had accepted Christianity to escape from their lower and untouchable caste status in Hinduism.

Since this study is highlighting the story of South African Indian Christians rooted in Indian history, an attempt is made to connect them with the emerging Dalit theology in India. An attempt is also made to show the interrelatedness of the 'native South Africans and Indians' struggle against oppression: for example Hindu casteism in India and racism through Apartheid in South Africa. An attempt is also made to point out the common understanding of a redemptive God expressed through Dalit and Black theologies. It is envisaged in this thesis that South African Indian Christians with native South Africans Christians can evolve together in formulating an appropriate mission praxis for the Anglican Church in South Africa.

The South African Indian Anglican Christians arrived in South Africa mainly in Natal from 1860 onwards mainly as indentured laborers and mostly from South India. They came to South Africa from a very complex cultural and social background. In order to understand their conversion story, it is imperative to trace the history and circumstances which were responsible for their conversion into the Christian faith. Since their conversion story is rooted in Indian history this study will require an in-depth study into the religious, political, social and economical background of India.

The mission of the Church has progressively faced enormous challenges. At times these challenges have raised critical discussions about the methods used by the Church in carrying out its mission in the world, particularly in the pluralistic societies of Asia. India

has an ancient history of civilization where religious and cultural values are deep-rooted and overlapping. Therefore the missional task of the Church in India has always been critical; both in formulating a theology of mission and in finding an appropriate mission paradigm.

It is observed that after conversion into the Christian faith converts were uprooted from their society and became alien amongst their own people. The reasons for this uprooting and alienation need investigation. The following two factors (causes) are noted for such alienation.

i) Converts, before accepting Christian faith, were imbedded in Hindu culture through the caste hierarchy. The Caste system was duly justified and perpetuated by Hinduism. Most of the converts were placed as lower caste, outcasts or untouchables in the Hindu caste system. They were denied any respectable status in the mainstream of Hindu society. The so-called respectable people from the upper castes dominate Hindu society at large.

After conversion these converts received a definite identity different to the past. Since culture and religion in Hinduism overlap many cultural symbols, customs and social mannerisms of the past remained for some converts as painful reminders of their subservient existence in the old religion. Therefore they were quick to embrace the identity of the powerful western community and its culture in negation of their past identity. Converts opted to change to the western lifestyle. Some of the converts were quick to imitate western people. Converts were seen wearing hats, boots and carrying guns for shikar (hunting) just like the western people of that time. This was an intentional move by the converts to show to their relatives and neighbors that they were no more one of them. They were now Christians and not lower caste or untouchable people.

ii) The Western Church was quick to absorb them into their culture but with some distance. Mission compounds were established as rehabilitation centers for these converts to protect them from the anger and atrocities of the upper caste. Such rehabilitation resulted in the isolation of these converts from the mainstream of Indian society. These

Mission compounds are some time criticized for uprooting converts from their culture and making them look strangers among their own people.

However the missionaries or western Christians never lived with the converts in the mission compounds. The missionary Bungalow was always at a distant place far from the mission compounds. The missionaries as Good Samaritans supported converts by visiting them regularly in the mission compounds. Converts therefore could not enter into a close and a fuller fellowship with the western Christians. They were now considered to be like a washer man's dog that neither belongs to the washer man nor to the street.

The above approaches, both from the converts, who were quick to westernize their lifestyle, and the Church's willingness to isolate them from the main stream of Hindu society, had an adverse affect on the life and witness of the Church.

There were further complications as the Church gave more preference to converts who came to Christianity from an upper caste Hindu background. This eventually left the converts from lower and untouchable backgrounds as subservient to the converts from the upper caste in the Church.

The Church has adopted mainly two approaches in doing their mission among the Indian Community.

i) The Church, without understanding the subaltern (inferior rank – a name for the general attitude in South Asian society in terms of class, caste gender etc)   religious background of the converts from lower and untouchable backgrounds, initially aimed to erase the past customs and traditions of the converts by demonizing their cultural symbols and rituals.

ii) At a later stage the Church with the help of upper caste converts used Hindu symbols and Hindu philosophy in pursuit of indigenization of the Indian Church. But this kind of indigenization always sat uncomfortably in the psyche of converts from the lower caste as it reminded them of their dehumanized status in Hinduism. For converts from the lower

caste Christianity was as an escape route from a degraded caste structure perpetuated by Hindu philosophy. This approach from the Church was quite insensitive.

The Church could have rather carefully addressed the motives of the converts from lower and untouchable backgrounds. The motives of conversion of these converts provide an opportunity to the Church to use their testimony to restore the remaining depressed and oppressed Indian communities. The Church could have encouraged these converts to become wounded healers for the existing depressed communities in India.

This study makes an attempt to comprehend the conversion story of South African Anglican Indian Christians and their missional role in the life of the Church in South Africa.

The focus of this study is on the motives of conversion based on the socio-psychological needs of the converts. The converts chose to make a definite transition from their old tradition by breaking the shackles of casteism in India and entering into a new-found liberated life in the Christian faith community. They made a choice to give up their old identity and oppressive cultural elements and accepted a new identity and a new culture offered by Christianity.

This study critically evaluates and points out that the Church has failed to use the testimony of converts from lower and untouchable backgrounds as part of a mission strategy to bring reconciliation and liberation for both the oppressed and the oppressor in the given society.

The motives of conversion of the masses and Church's inability to use their testimony more productively require a more in-depth study on the following aspects in relation to the conversion story of these people.

- The quest of converts for a new respectable identity in protest against their degraded identity in Hinduism which compelled them to adopt a new way of life in the Christian faith through the western Church

- The impact of religious conversion on the cultural identity of converts seen in their complete isolation from their previous community and its concomitant affect on the life and mission of the Church

- The disparity between Christians converted from upper caste Hindu society and those converted from lower caste and untouchable backgrounds has prevented the converts from lower and untouchable backgrounds living spiritually as 'wounded healers' or 'resurrection people' in the society.

In view of the above, this study 'The Impact of Religious Conversion on Cultural Identity - *The Conversion Story of South African Indian Anglican Christians'* requires both balance and sensitivity to understand the decisions of the converts and to investigate the Church's response to them. This study recommends that the Church could have used the conversion experience of Indian converts more maturely. Their testimony about the newfound love and experience of liberation and reconciliation in Christianity can help in formulating an appropriate mission praxis. This study encourages the converts not to become strangers amongst their own people and alien in their own society but to act and live their lives as 'wounded healers'.

In order to do mission effectively and to formulate an adequate mission paradigm to do mission in post-apartheid South Africa the following empirical research questions are proposed:

What were the motives and aspirations of the converts?
What has the Anglican Church done to guide the converts to spiritual maturity?

The above questions will help to unfold:

- The impact of conversion on the cultural identity of converts
- The socio-psychological aspects of decision making in conversion
- The empirical findings on the motives for conversion – A Search for a New Identity
- An appropriate mission paradigm based on some common experiences of Indian and ethnic South African Anglican Christians for doing mission effectively in post apartheid - South Africa.

In this dissertation I am making an attempt to invite both South African Indian Christians and South African black Christians to explore together what Christian obedience means in post-apartheid South Africa. Both South African Indian Christians and Black South African Christians have emerged from a history of pain and suffering. In this dissertation I have emphasized the liberating power of the Gospel of Jesus. For both Indian Christians and Black Christians theology is a living experience. This is quite evident in the emergence of Black theology in South Africa and Dalit theology in India. Both Black and Dalit theologies make a call to throw off the psychological shackles and structural bonds caused by racism in South Africa and casteism in India.

It is my hope that this study will help South African Anglican Indian Christians to understand their cultural background more intelligently and understand their Christian missional role in society as wounded healers in the new South Africa. I also pray that this study will help the Anglican Church in South Africa to encourage both Indian and ethnic South African Christians to share their conversion story with one another and use their conversion experiences for sharing the experience of love and liberation with people of all communities in post-apartheid South African society.

1. 2 Need for and significance of the study

This study is significant as it studies in detail the socio-political and religious and economic background of the South African Indian community before their arrival in

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South Africa. This study connects South African Indians to their roots in India. Most of the studies on South African Indians have been done from the time of their arrival in South Africa. This one undertakes an in-depth study of their socio-religio and political and cultural background in India.

The converts from India come from a complex cultural background. Their culture continues to remain a creative subject of discussion for the Church. Culture and religion in their old Hindu faith constantly overlapped. For this reason the question of the impact of their religious conversion on their cultural identity raises a creative tension both for them and for the Church. For converts the transition from one faith tradition to another had been a painful process. Their affiliation to the Christian faith had been socially very strenuous and psychologically quite demanding for them.

People from various cultural backgrounds have entered into the Christian faith. There had been an ongoing process of reciprocal and critical interpretation and assimilation between the cultural backgrounds of the Indian converts and Christianity. This study points out that this varied cultural background of converts does provide a creative and energetic mission praxis to the Church of God for doing their mission effectively.

There is a great need to understand the criticism of missionaries in India regarding polluting the Indian culture by converting Hindu people into the Christian faith. It is a matter of significance to understand the reasons for such criticism, which are now a permanent argument against the Western Church in India. The Church as an institution is said to be spoiling Indian culture and endangering social tranquility and national solidarity by proselytizing the poor section of society with the power of their money. There is a great need to understand this criticism. It is interesting to note that even today in South Africa there is a growing hostility between the Tamil–speaking Hindus and the Christians of Tamil background in Durban, and to some extent in Johannesburg, on the issue of conversion. The local Hindu Tamil community in South Africa criticizes the conversion of Hindu and Tamil people. They call it Christian proselytization. This study looks into this criticism objectively.

It is difficult to understand when does evangelism become proselytism? And when does the legitimate call to repentance and new birth become manipulation to create church growth for numbers' sake? However, this study supports conversion and considers it a healthy reality for those who have been liberated from an oppressive caste system. This study also points out that Church has failed to use the testimony of these converts for restoring the oppressed and marginal in the society. The impact of the Gospel in the life of a convert is not limited to shifting from one tradition to another. But the true impact is realized in the converts' commitment to the call to conversion. This study suggests that the conversion of the Indian converts is a call to be wounded healers.

The need for and significance of this study is in understanding the quest of people (from the so-called lower caste and untouchables) and their desire to follow Jesus Christ and the Christian faith. It is important to understand how the poor masses of India get attracted to a foreign religion in a country with an ancient civilization. It will be quite significant to understand the motives behind conversion and the kind of response the Western Church has made. Oddie in 20th century India quotes the newspaper 'Hindu' of that time which writes that,

> "Between the Hindu community and the pariahs (untouchables) there is little love lost. Apart from the missionaries, the pariahs have no chance of rising above their present condition of extreme poverty and degradation". (Wingate 1999: 18)

The Gospel of Jesus challenges all existing cultures. The teachings of Jesus in the Gospels predominantly speak about liberation of the oppressed and point to a culture where people exercise a just life in relation with one other. However the presence of new converts has always been a challenge to the Church. The Church has to be sensitive in understanding how converts receive the gospel, as they make it their own.

The different response of missionaries in relation to converts from the upper-caste and lower-caste resulted in the perpetuation of casteism within the Church. P. Nirmal, a prominent Dalit theologian, points out that

> "The missionaries gave status to upper class converts whom they felt had given up much, while they saw the Dalits as 'mass movement Christians', not even as 'converts'. (Wingate 1999: 21)

The Churches' hegemony is pointed out by Dalit theologians who observe that

> "Most of the contributions to Indian Christian theology in the past came from high caste converts to Christianity. The result has been that Indian Christian theology has perpetuated within itself what I prefer to call the "Brahminic tradition". (Clark 1999: 36)

This study is also significant as it suggests that ethnic South African Anglican Christians and South African Indian Anglican Christians can work together towards building the new South Africa. They both share a number of common experiences in their conversion stories.

In the peculiar circumstances due to apartheid policy in South Africa the Indian indentured laborers, which included many Christian converts from lower castes and untouchable backgrounds, had no respite from oppression. The Group Areas Act in South Africa segregated communities in society based on the race and color of the people.

In the South African context the Brahaminic hegemony could be compared with Christian rule under apartheid policy. Though South Africa is a Christian country Bishop Desmond Tutu (Lubbe 1994: 128) in the South African apartheid context rightly said that Christians have not lived their lives according to Christian principles or ideals. Desmond says that,

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"…The policy of apartheid was perpetrated not by pagans but by those who claimed publicly and frequently that they were Christians". (Tutu Desmond, 1994: 128)

This study significantly includes the voices of Dalits through Indian Dalit Christian theology and voices emerging from Black theology in South Africa. Both Dalit and Black theology have emerged in negation to the injustices committed against the weak by the powerful. Dalit theology in particular has emerged in repudiation of the Indian Christian theology perpetuated by converts from the upper-caste in India. Propagators of Dalit theology say,

"The roots of the current Indian Christian theology lie in the experience of mostly upper caste/class Christian converts of this century and the last… thus their theology did not address itself to or reflect the issues which the majority of the Christians faced either before or after they became Christians especially the Dalits". (Clark, 1999: 41)

The experiences of Indians and ethnic Christians during the apartheid policy of South Africa can be of great value in the formulation of a relevant Christian mission paradigm and theology of mission in post apartheid South Africa. In this study I am going to present my own experience in Lenasia as an experiment in support of my recommendation that Indian and Native South African Christians have the capacity to wok together in building the new South Africa. They together can work as wounded healers for all those who continue to live a weary and burdened life due to various circumstances in post apartheid South Africa.

This study is also important as I share my experience of eight years of ministry as a priest in the Parish of Christ the Saviour, Lenasia in South Africa. In this study I am sharing my understanding of mission by narrating the mission paradigm implemented by my Parish. Today the members of my parish both from Indian and South African ethnic backgrounds

are working together as wounded healers, in healing and building communities in Lenasia.

This study aims to affirm that the task of the church continues to be one of propagating the message of liberation found in the teachings of Jesus Christ to the world community. The Gospel of Jesus continues to remain a liberative force. The Church is obliged to share the gospel of liberation to all those who are marginal, oppressed and exploited in this world.

1. 3 Understanding Culture

The cultural context is an important factor for understanding religious conversion. The meanings of conversion are rooted in the personal histories of people as they shift their allegiance from one tradition to another. Edward Burnett Taylor (1832-1917) in 1871 in his book, "Primitive culture" defines culture as

> "That complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society". (Pinto, 1985, 2)

Therefore, understanding religious conversion will require a study into various subjects/disciplines related to human science.

1.3.1 Concept, Definition, Characteristics and Pluriformity

This section briefly records the concept, definition, characteristics and pluriformity in understanding culture. The terms contact, communication and in-culturation are used by different schools of human science and theology to describe and understand the proliferation of culture and the converts' struggle for new adjustments during their movements and transitions from one tradition to another and from one faith to another.

The concept of culture is about a century old. This concept was developed in the 19th century by the socio-anthropological school of England and later by that of the United States and France. There is no unanimous definition of culture as such.

For Robert H. Lowie society plays a major role in an individual's acquisition of culture.

For example,

> "… Beliefs, customs, artistic norms, food habits, crafts which comes to him not by his own creative activity but as a legacy from the past, conveyed by formal or informal education". (Pinto 1985: 2)

Clifford Geerts, a leading current American anthropologist understands culture as,

> "A historical transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions, expressed in symbolic forms by means of which human beings communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitude toward life". (Pinto 1985: 2)

Some of the definitions of culture are summed up in the following phrases:

> 'total society heredity', 'tradition', 'the total life way of a people', 'the social legacy the individual acquires from a group', 'the personality of a group', 'the man-made part of the environment'. (Pinto 1985: 2)

Culture in general is a whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and belief. It is culture that gives man and woman the ability to reflect upon him/herself. It is culture that makes us specifically human, rational beings, endowed with a critical judgment and a sense of moral commitment. It is through culture that a

man or woman expresses him/herself, recognizes his/her incompleteness, questions his/her own achievements, seeks untiringly for new meanings and creates works through which he/she transcends his/her limitations.

Culture holds a community together with a common framework of meaning. Culture is preserved in language, thought patterns, ways of life, attitudes, symbols and presuppositions, and celebrated in art, music etc. And all these constitute the collective heritage, which is handed down to generations still to come. In other words,

> "…Culture is all about the life of a society…Culture is society's standardized way of coping with different environments". (Pinto 1985: 5)

Pinto in his research attaches the following characteristics to a culture:

> "… A set of meanings and values expressed and transmitted through symbols… a way of life of a social group, not of an individual as such…is learned. … It derives from the biological and historical components of human existence… it is structured… it is divided into concepts… it is dynamic… it is the instrument whereby the individual adjusts to his total setting and gains the means for creative expression". (Pinto 1985: 4)

1. 3. 2 Contact, Communication and Inculturation

While speaking about contact, communication and inculturation one has to be aware that

> "Every culture is different because the answers to the essentially same questions posed by human situations are different. Cultures are different in the same way that societies are different. Culture, as such, does not exist. It exists in a particular space and time; in a particular socio-historical context… every culture has at the same time richness and poverty, affirmation and negation, value and limit. Every culture is at once particular and universal. This necessitates culture-contact and communication with other cultures". (Pinto 1985: 6)

The world is no longer divided into "civilized" and "barbarian" nations. The principle of diversity of culture is universally realized and accepted and emphasized by the Church at large. The Church today is more open to the diversity of human cultures. Pinto in his work records the following reasons for such openness:

> "…nationalism and patriotism…decolonization and the rise of independent new nations…developments of the means of communications…developments of different social sciences, especially sociology and anthropology". (Pinto, 1985, 6)

The Church has addressed the issue of the cultural identity of converts in non-Semitic Asia through western models of inculturation for a long time. Some of the following models are good examples.

> "… the Latin model of Incarnation in a non-Christian culture; the Greek model of assimilation of a non-Christian philosophy; the north European model of accommodation to a non-Christian religiosity; and the monastic model of participation in a non-Christian spirituality". (Birmingham 1992: 116)

Therefore it will be good to record emerging terminology in view of greater awareness amongst churches about the pluriformity of cultures and genuine respect for them amongst its membership. The terms **"adaptation"** and **"accommodation"** are used by Vatican II to express the encounter between the Christian message and different cultures.

> "Both these terms, however, express the external aspect of encounter between the Christian faith and different cultures". (Pinto, 1985, 9)

Progressively several new terms have been used in Christian thinking in dealing with the cultural identity of converts: **"Indigenization"** (derives from a nature metaphor, that is, of the soil), **"Contextualization"** (is implied in indigenization and yet more, a dynamic aspect which is open to change as well as being future oriented); **"Incarnation"** (used in

place of adaptation, and at the same time signifying inculturation by way of an intrinsic analogy).

An anthropological term **"Acculturation"** sometimes described as synonymous with "culture-contact" is widely used. It

> "comprehends those phenomena which results when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups" (Pinto 1985: 10).

The other term used, **"Enculturation"**, is also an anthropological term but is not yet widely accepted. M.J. Herskovits probably introduced it. The term is defined in terms of,

> "A learning experience, which marks humans off from other creatures and by means of which, initially and in later life, they achieve competence in their culture…". (Pinto 1985: 11)

In other words enculturation is a process by which an individual is introduced to his or her culture. Through this gradual process of enculturation an individual achieves competence in his own culture. However, no individual ever achieves a full and complete competence and therefore it is a life long process. Enculturation is a process of learning all the aspects of a culture.

The concept of **"Inculturation"** has been in missiological circles since 1960 and was popular amongst the Jesuit study circle. Asian Bishops used it for the first time in 1974 at the Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' conferences. The statement of this conference reads,

> "The local church is a church incarnate in a people, a church indigenous and inculturated…The Christian message must find its roots in human cultures and

must also transform these cultures. In this sense we can say that catechesis is an instrument of inculturation". (Pinto, 1985, 12)

Inculturation is understood to be,

"… The dynamic relation between the Christian message and diverse cultures; an insertion of the Christian life into a culture; an ongoing process of reciprocal and critical interpretation and assimilation between them" (Pinto 1985: 13).

Today both in the western world and in the urban areas of the developing countries the younger generation is openly questioning the relevance of the culture transmitted by their elders. Many young people are rejecting the given cultures. However the young people's opposition to the culture familiar to the older generation is not a question of repudiating the age-old values, but it is a way of strongly affirming their preference for other ways of seeing things, of imagining and of behaving.

There are emerging new cultures. However they are difficult to define. The values and meanings of these emerging cultures can be characterized as,

"The value of affectivity, with stress on warm interpersonal relations and community life; a dislike for impersonal, industrial and the urban life system… love of nature, contact with land, protection of nature, criticism of environmental pollution, science and technology... affirmation of new roles for women with equality and freedom... a rediscovery of spiritual non-materialistic values, which were not found in formal, over-institutionalized religions but in new religious sects and cults, in community celebrations and exuberance, even in experimentation with drugs.…assertion of one's identity with a right to be different, to be respected for what one is, protesting against all kinds of impositions and anonymity in pluralistic societies… demand for justice and equality. New generations and new independent nations demand: justice and peace; link of solidarity with all, so that peace is consolidated and wars avoided;

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and the fostering of the development of all countries, societies, and individuals".
(Pinto, 1985: 8)

No culture is in pure isolation. An encounter between cultures can be both enriching and destructive. In understanding the conversion story of people from their faith and their culture it is important to apply a dialogical approach.

"…In culture-contact no culture can impose its own norms and ideals on others, as universally valid". (Pinto, 1985, 7)

1. 4 Understanding Conversion

People change and people seek God. In the secular realm identity experience is parallel to religious conversion in its proof, presence and impact. Conversions are of almost "infinite variety". Therefore, like culture, the definition of conversion is also complex and difficult. It becomes more complex and difficult when human change is attributed to many sources. Thinkers and humanists try to encapsulate conversion experience with their own particular emphasis. It becomes more complex when the debate between suddenness versus a gradual process of conversion, external versus internal factors in conversion, and the contextual versus the universal meaning of conversion becomes intense.

"The word "conversion" is primarily a Jewish, Christian and Muslim term symbolizing a radical change in personal religious beliefs and behaviors. In its broader sense, however, it refers to both personal and communal changes and change in community affiliation". (Southard, 1992, 9)

In the Old and New Testaments in the Bible, conviction and conversion are linked together. Phrases like 'born again', 'born from above', 'newness of life' 'made alive in Christ', 'a new creation', 'as a new-born babe', and, 'being raised from dead' are used to explain conversion.

In the Bible, the Hebrew word s*hubh* is used to express both the transitive and intra-transitive moods surrounding the meaning of conversion. And the meanings of these terms "a turning around", "to turn in the course of action", or "to be restored" are quite relevant to the understanding of conversion. Another word, *haphac*, occurs once in Isaiah 60:5 and simply means to 'turn'.

Religious conversion in the New Testament is from the Hebrew *shubh* and is translated in Greek as *"epistrephen"* which means "to turn ones back upon someone". For Christians the word "conversion" primarily symbolizes "a radical change in personal religious beliefs and behaviors.

> "In its broader sense, however, it refers to both personal and communal changes and change in community affiliation". (Gillespie 1991: 25).

Other words used for conversion in the New Testament are: *Proselutos, a prosylite'* which means 'a type of belief' (Matthew 23:15; Acts 2: 10, 6:5, 13: 43;) *aparche,* translated as 'first fruits' (Romans 15: 5; 1 Corinthians 16: 15) and *neophutos* 'neophyte; recent converts' (1 Timothy 3:6).

The meanings from these words points to a person who has newly changed his beliefs, attitudes or life style.

There is another closely related term for conversion *metanoia* which means,

> "A change of mind and has connotations of conversion including a change of mind after reflection; a going beyond the present attitude, status or outlook; or repentance". (Gillespie 1991: 26)

Karl Barth made a distinction between s*hubh* as a once-and-for-all or repeated individual movement and *metanoia* as an inclusive movement in which man moves forward steadily to continual new things. Therefore Greek and Hebrew understanding of conversion

denote a more profound reorganization to reality than was usually meant in the popular usage of the term conversion.

According to Eric Routley,

> "Conversion means stopping, turning, attending and pursuing a new course". (Gillespie, 1991: 26)

In the Biblical understanding of conversion, it can be both gradual and instantaneous.

However with a few notable exceptions, such as Hindu mendicancy, "conversion" (in Hinduism and Buddhism) is communal in both senses of the term. To become a Hindu means to enter the Hindu social order. It is to take one's place in the caste system, which is the embodiment of Hinduism.

In Eastern religions and particularly Hinduism conversion is understood more as a process of change rather than a moment of radical conversion.

Southhard in his study of Hinduism says that Hinduism is not a fixed set of beliefs or a doctrinal creed. The meaning of conversion in such a diverse religion cannot easily be defined. In Hinduism there are,

> "Dogmas ranging from materialistic atheism, pantheism, and polytheism, to monotheism and abstract monism". (Southard, 1992, 10)

Southhard in his studies points to two assumptions as essential in the Hindu view of conversion.

> "(1) Personal spiritual pilgrimage with the goal of Moksha (salvation, enlightenment - final realization of perfection where one transcends history and this life): conversion therefore is defined not as a radical change in beliefs but as an evolutionary progression of beliefs that lead a person to self-realization.

(2) The roads to Moksha – the term Moksha had been interpreted as salvation, enlightenment or final realization of perfection where one transcends history and this life. The roads to Moksha according to Hindu philosophy are many". (Southard 1992: 10)

Southhard further describes three types of roads to Moksha ascribed by Hindus:

"(i) *Karma Marga* – or paths of duty: conversion here is to begin performing the rituals prescribed by Hinduism for one's status in society and one's stage in life. (ii) *Bhakti Marga* – or paths of devotion: conversion here means a person must worship the God of his or her caste. He or she also has the right to choose a personal God. (iii) *Jnana Marga* – way of wisdom: The road is metaphysical, not theological. Conversion is to enter a life of strict physical and mental discipline (Yoga). The goal is not heaven but enlightenment". (Southard 1992: 10-11)

Indian Hindu thinkers reject the western definition of conversion. Though there are outbursts of sectarian fanaticism in Hinduism, in general a philosopher like Radhakrishnan considers that

"…The main note of Hinduism is one of respect and good will of other creeds". (Southard 1992: 12)

Swami Vivekananda, at the World Religious Parliament in Chicago, 1893 explained his view on conversion. He said,

"The Christian is not to become Hindu or a Buddhist, nor is the Hindu or Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth". (Southard, 1992, 12-13)

For some Indian Hindu thinkers:

> "Conversion for the individual means entering a course of action – a way of life…'not creed but conduct'… 'a change of behavior'. The highest road to truth is "Satyagriha", the unswerving search for truth. Orthodox Hinduism exhorts the highest seekers to drop out of society and become Sanyassins". (Southard, 1992: 13-14)

Today Conversion is a broad and complex subject of study. Some of the followings opinions and understanding from scholars and human scientists can be helpful in conceptualizing conversion.

William James, Edwin Starbuck and G. Stanley Hall explain conversion as a sudden, dramatic, radical change in the life of a convert. William James emphasises conversion as the affair of an individual person in solitude and an experience in isolation.

However, the circumstances and experiences of conversion of different people from different cultural and historical backgrounds have raised growing debates amongst human scientists. Some emphasise the suddenness of the conversion. And some view conversion as a gradual process.

William James understands conversion where individual men in their solitude suddenly experience a radical change. But for Wayne Proudfoot the conversion experience is gradually shaped by a complex pattern of concepts, commitments and expectations. Wayne Proudfoot differs from William James. He considers William James' approach as narrow.

According to Wayne Proudfoot the formative factors among individuals play an important role in decision making. The conversion experience therefore is not an affair in isolation but is related with their past experiences.

Proudfoot suggests that

> "Even a narrow focus on "individual men in their solitude" needs to be tempered by a recognition of the formative role that language and beliefs, and through them society, culture and history have upon individual "feelings, acts and experiences". (Gallagher 1990: 24)

In the late 19th century conversion was an important topic in the field of psychology. In the last few decades other human scientists, especially sociologists and anthropologists, have been active in examining conversion, investigating the new religious movements and the process of religious change instigated by missionaries in the third world setting.

The existing psychological literature falls into one of two broad categories:

> "(1) Experimental and microscopic in its concerns, exploring for example the role of depression, suggestibility, or some other such variable in the conversion process
> (2) The other is more the orectical and global, in the quest to understand the human predicament and uses a broader case study and includes clinical methods". (Southard 1992: 159-160)

In this study I would like to deal with the broader boundaries of the theory of conversion which takes into account the boundaries of psychology, sociology, anthropology and other human sciences.

The conversion of depressed communities in India into Christianity has to be seen in light of their caste status in society. The caste system in India highlights the oppressive social system, which created communities with a depressant mentality. An in-depth study into the cultural history of India has helped me to formulate a meaning of conversion from a socio-psychological perspective. Through conversion, converts from a depressed

background have formulated for themselves a new respectable identity in and through the Christian Faith. For Indian converts, conversion had been sociologically and psychologically a liberating and reconciling experience. The Church has responded to the psychological needs of the converts according to Webster with enormous compassion and love. Webster says that,

> "It ought to be frankly recognized that it may be towards the Motherhood of the Church, rather than towards the Fatherhood of the Saviour from sin, that the faces of the Paraiyars and aboriginal races of India are slowly being turned. They may be seeking baptism for the most part, not from a desire to have their lives or consciences cleansed from sin and to enter the eternal life of God, but because the church presents itself to them as a refuge from oppression and a power that fosters hope and makes for betterment". (Wingate 1999: 19)

Religious conversion is the highest form of change in a person's life. The experience of religious converts therefore is one of an ongoing and creative process of transformation. The nature of transformation depends on the motives of converts based on their experience of change.

John Steinbeck sees conversion with or without the religious element with five basic types of experiences and one of them is traditional transition where,

> "Someone leaves one major religious tradition for another…these changes typified as change in worldview rather than personal orientation and self-transcendent experience. Such transitions are painful and yield some form of syncretism". (Gillespie 1991: 14)

In the following two definitions wholeness and actualisation are said to be the main tenets of conversion.

According to L. W. Grensted,

> "Religious conversion is a building up of a sense of wholeness. This stress on the function of conversion became a new trend. His conviction that the central issue in conversion was wholeness allowed him to see the person as a total unit and see conversion as an aid in unifying human kind". (Gillespie, 1991: 40)

Orlo Strunk equates conversion experience,

> "With that of 'actualisation', the process which helps to stabilize, exteriorise and motivate people. Conversion is defined by its effect, and is the process by which individuals realize themselves". (Gillespie, 1991, 43)

The Indian social and religious context had compelled depressed communities to find a new religious culture for them and their generation beyond Hinduism. The depressed communities were in search of a new worldview, a sense of wholeness and emancipation from caste slavery. Christianity has offered this possibility to them. And converts responded positively to this offer from Christianity to attain emancipation from caste bondage and an abundant life in new-found spirituality.

1. 5 Delimitation

This study deals with the broader boundaries of theories of conversion, which takes into account psychology, sociology, anthropology and other human sciences. However, the emphasis will be on the socio-psychological needs of the converts. Though this study does look into the spiritual aspects of conversion of Hindus into the Christian faith, the emphasis will be more on the secular meaning of conversion as "identity formation". The conversion of Hindus of lower caste and outcasts into the Christian faith is seen as an entrance into a larger liberty and more abundant life.

This study will not be dealing in detail with the exact decisive moment of conversion. The emphasis will be more on the secular or social motives of conversion. This thesis

will not be dealing with individual conversion stories. The emphasis in this study is more on mass movements which Donald McGavaran calls "people movements". He says,

> "They are only 'mass' over a large number of years, as group after group converts". (Wingate 1999: 14)

However some individual names of converts from upper caste Hindu background are mentioned in dealing with the section 'Indian Christian theology' later in this thesis.

I will be interpreting selected lyrics composed by early converts in Hindi, Hindustani, Urdu and Tamil in order to draw their meanings and understandings of the message of the gospel and the way converts had understood and interpreted their own conversion and its impact on their culture. These lyrics are some of the recorded testimonies of early converts. However, my lack of knowledge of the Tamil language has made me to use the English translation version of Tamil lyrics found in the Tamil hymn book.

My personal meetings with converts will be mainly confined from second generation onwards and is limited to the Parish of Lenasia, Johannesburg and Chatsworth, Durban. Empirical research in this study will be based on my listening to the second generation Christians about their Christian journey. This will include converts in Durban and my work context in Lenasia, Johannesburg. The converts contacted for this thesis are mainly from a Hindu background hence limiting the scope of the study to Hinduism and Christianity. I have only used one song from North India composed by a Muslim convert.

This study focuses mainly on converts who came to the Christian faith through the ministry of the Anglican Church both in India and South Africa.

Missiological and theological debates in this study are confined to those themes which are relevant for this study. It will be impossible to discuss all the missiological and theological themes available. Even the broader boundaries of theories of conversion and definitions of culture will be limited to the selected areas of interest which are relevant

for this study. An attempt is made at incorporating some common theological themes emerging from Black African and Indian South African conversion experiences in search of a possible way forward for both these communities to work together as 'wounded healers'.

1. 6 Methods used in this study

The method used in this study is multidisciplinary. I have used the theoretical approach to understand the question of conversion. I have looked at socio-psychological literature to understand what happens to the individual and the group, before, during and after conversion. I have read the literature available on the religious, political and economic history of the Indian context to understand the anthropological and cultural aspects of conversion. I have used the research of various people into South African Indian Christianity.

It is not possible to trace the deep feelings of the original converts in person, as they are no more in this world. Therefore I have tried to interpret some of the lyrics composed by the early converts that are found in the hymn books used by the Church at large in India and to understand what it meant for converts to accept faith in Jesus Christ and how they viewed their new existence as the followers of Jesus Christ.

The purpose of analyzing these songs is to highlight the testimonies of converts who, through the lyrics composed by them, reflect on their movement towards that God who offered them wholeness and opportunities for holistic development.

I am interpreting the words of the lyrics which deal with major sociological and psychological issues faced by the converts. A number of lyrics speak about courage and hope, peace, joy and a positive attitude developed in Christian faith over against the old depressed mentality in Hinduism. The lyrics are an expression of loyalty to a new found faith; the lyrics also reflect the converts' ideological position and a new sense of belonging and acceptance, a sense of personal and cosmic identity against the old

religious and social order in which they had lost their human dignity and identity. These lyrics unfold their spiritual experience in Christian faith.

The songs are written in different languages. However the emphasis in this work is on the collective experiences of converts coming from the same socio-psychological backgrounds with a common experience in caste Hinduism. The method used to draw meaning and the experiences of converts from these songs will be through interpreting the words and emerging themes to help South African Anglican Indian Christians to connect with their roots and the spiritual experience of Indian Christian converts after conversion.

1.6.1 My own journey in to Christian faith and my personal encounters with other Christians converts

My life in the Christian faith is 51 years old. My father was baptized into the Christian faith in 1952 at the age of 24 and married a Muslim convert in 1953 where after I was born in 1954. His motivation for conversion was the message of liberation found in the Gospel of Jesus. During this time many young enlightened Hindu youth were actively participating in the Hindu Reformed Movement in India and many upper caste Hindu young men were reading the Bible particularly the gospels. For some the Gospel of Jesus had a profound message, which resulted in the changing of their life and for many the highest form of change took place through religious conversion.

After my graduation I became an ordained minister in the Church of North India. As an ordained minister for the last 27 years, I have ministered in India amongst converts predominantly from a Hindu background, and the last 8 years amongst the Indian community in South Africa who are mainly from a Tamil Hindu background. This experience of working amongst converts both from South and North Indian backgrounds has helped me to understand the struggle these converts have undergone and continue to undergo in maintaining their identity as Christians amongst their own people. My interest in interfaith ministry has enabled me to undertake extensive readings of literature and sacred writings of other faiths particularly Hinduism. It has been interesting to observe

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that converts at large who come from the depressed community in India are not awfully excited to identify with their old culture in Hinduism.

In the process, my ministry amongst Indian converts as an Ordained Priest has helped me to analyze conversion more objectively and my reading of the literature has helped me to understand the subjective aspects of conversion among the Indian people from Hinduism to Christianity. I realize that the transition of a depressed community in India to Christianity had been very painful. At times converts either yielded to some form of syncretism or negated completely the old tradition and followed the western mode of life. It is these mixed reactions that motivate me to understand the concept of conversion from the perspective of the convert.

My ministry at the Anglican Parish of Christ the Saviour, Lenasia (a suburb which emerged as result of the group areas act under apartheid) has given me a much broader spectrum to understand the life and challenges faced by Indian Christian converts. During my eight years of ministry in Lenasia from 1996 to 2004, I have seen this community very closely with identity crisis and lack of perception about their role as Indian Christians in the new South Africa. I will be narrating my encounter with Indian Christians in Lenasia in the last chapter and share our experiment in understanding our roles as Indian Christians in Lenasia (at the micro level) in building the nation in the post apartheid era. This study is motivated by my ministry in Lenasia.

My own Christian faith journey has helped me to affirm that the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels continue to invite weary and burdened people and to energize them to use their suffering as their strength to draw those oppressors closer to God who acts as perpetrators in this world. It is the victim/sufferer who has the capacity to bring hope to the world by living out the redemptive narrative discovered by the victim through his/her faith in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This study is to encourage South African Anglican Indian Christians to participate in the process of reconciliation in post apartheid South Africa and guiding the nation in creating an all inclusive (non-caste, non-class and non-racial) community to live peacefully in this rainbow nation.

1.6.2 Listening to the Converts and visit to the Archives

In Lenasia and Durban I organized reflections on the subject 'Our Faith and Culture'. Those who attended these reflections included Indian Christians who have belonged to Christianity for more than one generation and also converts who are hardly few years old in the Christian faith. The group also included occasionally clergy from the Roman Catholic, Anglican and United Reformed Churches, and pastors from Evangelical fellowships from different races.

I have collected testimonies of some visiting Dalit Indians in South Africa who had come to attend the UNO conference in Durban in the year 2001 with title *Xenophobia - International Racism.* The focus of my conversations and reflections with converts was on the impact of conversion on their cultural identity.

I have visited the archives in Durban and spent some time with the Anglican congregations at Chatsworth and Merebank to experience and have a 'feel' of the converts who came to South Africa and have continued to remain faithful Christians after two and three generations of their Christian history. I have also collected the personal testimony of recent converts in the areas of Durban amongst the Indian Community. As a participant observer I have heard the stories of converts in Durban and in Lenasia, Johannesburg.

Conversion into Christianity for the Indian masses was a great historic moment. Conversion for them meant a definite break from Hinduism. Christianity offered them a great opportunity to live with self-respect and dignity. However in view of the nature of the social and family structure of Indian society, Indian Christians continued to be linked culturally with the rest of the Hindu society in one way or the other. They are imbedded in their social structure but with different ethnic identity. They are identified by the Indian society as Indian Christians.

The second and third generations of converts have definitely grown in terms of their identity as Christians. However their interactions with their families or relatives who continue to follow the Hindu religion continue to remind them of their status in the

Christian faith as converts from a Hindu background. It is also important to note that there is a definite cultural difference between a western Christian and an Indian Christian. This difference is also a constant reminder to an Indian Christian that they are converts into the Christian faith from Indian race and culture. Therefore there is a prevailing attitude among Indian Christians that they are converts. However this attitude in no way undermines their commitment to the Christian faith.

Conversion is an ongoing process. Within the life of the Church many converts get influenced by different emphases in the teachings of Jesus Christ. There is a growing movement of members from the Anglican Churches joining the charismatic churches around them. There are Christians who are converting to a humanistic approach in their faith journey. There are Christians who are being converted into activist movements by reflecting on and interpreting religious scriptures to find the political and secular ideologies in religions.

Therefore in this study there will be responses to various underlying questions based on the conversion motives of converts and the response of the Church to these motives. For example:

Ecclesiologically, responses will be made to the questions about how far do the converts acclimatize to the church structures and feel at home? What kind of hospitality does the Church offers to the seekers?

Sociologically and psychologically, responses to the questions about how does a convert becomes more self-assured in their new identity over against their past identity? To what extent have men and women experienced emancipation and new dignity?

Ethically, responses are made to the question about how converts changed their behaviour to meet the new standards of faith?

Spiritually, responses are made to the questions how far does their life in their new faith become integrated? And how far is this expressed both parochially in worship and prayer and Bible reading and also in testifying their experience to their neighbours?

1.6. 3 Literature and other readings

Culture and conversion are complex subjects of study. There is a wealth of literature available on this subject. The following are some of the selected literature I have referred to and used extensively for this study.

Eugene V. Galagher's book *'Expectation and Experience (Explaining Religious Conversion')* examines the experiences of converts and also of external observers. **The** explanatory approaches to conversion covers personal, psychological, theological, and sociological theories of religion. This book has a double focus: it describes and assesses a study of conversion through a series of individual cases and it also analyzes the contribution of conversion to the general study of religion. For example one of the chapters deal with two different theoretical commitments; William James' (emphasis on 'suddenness' and individual man in their solitude independent of and prior to specific belief and practice) observation that conversion is just amazing grace. But Wayne Proudfoot finds William James narrow in his approach on conversion and recognizes that prior history, the immediate social and religious circumstances are responsible for conversion. He understands conversion as 'gradual' and not only 'sudden'. The author tries to explain the importance of the converts. The claims of the converts can be theology with a small 't'. However the explanation of conversion of an individual by an outsider, which can be called a secondary explanation, leads directly to a rather broader theological understanding of conversion. The author believes that for the outsider's secondary explanation, based to a very large extent on the experience of others, the goal for them is the systematization, generalization and as is proper for theology, the setting of norms. And for that reason their subject matter is not individual but the whole field of Christian conversion in whatever religious tradition the theologian stands. They strive less to describe what did happen to a given person and more to prescribe what should happen to any convert worthy of the designation.

H. Newton Malony and Samuel Southward have edited a *'Handbook of Religious Conversion'.* This book pays attention to Stanley Hall's theory of conversion; a noteworthy early attempt to combine perspectives from a variety of theories. According to Hall, faith in Jesus Christ transforms persons and gives them the strength to love. Another feature of this book is its intent to be comprehensive. A number of chapters of this book are written by prominent authors: 'Conversion in Hinduism and Buddhism' by Paul G. Hiebert, 'Conversion in Islam' by J. Dudley Woodberry, 'Conversion in Group Settings' by Charles H. Kraft, 'the Cultural Anthropology of Conversion' by Allan R. Tippet, and 'The Psychology of Conversion' by Lewis R. Rambo are of great value to this study.

V. Bailey Gillespie's book *'The Dynamics of Religious Conversion (Identity and Transformation)* is of immense value to this study. The book points out that people change and people seek God. In secular terms "identity experience" often seems parallel to religious conversion in its proof, presence and impact. The early chapters identify both the context of change and the factors, which influence it. In this book the relationship of religious conversion and personal identity illustrated as religious conversion is seen as a rich type of identity experience providing ideology, fit purpose and worldview.

J.B. Brown's book *'Christian Indians in Natal 1860-1911 (A historical and statistical study):* traces the history of the Indians who came in South Africa as indentured agricultural labourers in the 19th Century. They lived in poverty, in unfavorable climates, and in a region subject to famines in India. He speaks about casteism and untouchables and raises the question why did these agricultural workers leave their land, their families and familiar villages to emigrate to South Africa and other countries? The reason for these people to come to South Africa was due to debt, mortgage and particularly loss of land in India. He also raises the question why many labourers came and left the country: and the answers he offers are poverty, insufficient and neglected medical care, unrealistic terms and conditions for work and poor payments in Natal. Some of the other questions this book attempts to answer about Indian Christian indentured workers are: Where did they come from, what happened to them once they arrived in Natal, and did they continue

to practice their faith here? Were there any large-scale conversions of Hindus as there had been for example, in Chota Nagpur? This book also discusses the statistics given by various authors about the number of Christian Indians who came to Natal.

Herby Sylvester Govinden's, thesis, *'The Anglican Church among Indians in Kwazulu Natal'*. Govinden in this thesis makes an attempt to record the growth and development of the Anglican Indian Missions in South Africa. He undertakes to explore the work of the Revd. Dr. Lancelot Parker Booth who was the pioneer of Anglican Mission among Indians in Natal and what his successors were able to achieve during the period 1883 – 1983, and the factors which promoted or hindered the work of the missions and the place of the missions in the broader context of its time.

Godwin R. Singh has edited the book *'A call to discipleship – Baptism and Conversion'*. This is an important book to understand conversion in an Indian context. The background of this book is rooted in the ecumenical conference in India, which was a culmination point of a major study project initiated by National Council of Churches in India. The objective of the conference was to stimulate the thinking of Christians in India on the subject of baptism and conversion in the context of the religious, social, cultural and political situation of the country. An issue raised in chapter one which is the inaugural address by Thomas Mar Athanasius (with the title 'Baptism and Conversion in the context of mission in India') takes the form of an exhortation about the need to experiment in providing some kind of non-communal *Koinonia* to those who accept Christ, but do not accept baptism – 'The Hindu Christian?' Some of the questions raised are: Can a person be a Hindu Christian or Hindu Disciple of Christ? What aspects of his culture and social life should the convert be encouraged to preserve and help to make them the medium for the expression of Christian faith and love? Should conversion and Christianity mean ceasing to be a member of one's social community and joining another? Should the convert leave the religious community of which he has been a member?

Andrew Wingate's book emerged from his doctoral thesis *'The Church and Conversion (A recent Conversion to and from Christianity in the Tamil Area of South India)'.* Andrew chooses a 'multi-disciplinary' approach and develops a comprehensive view on conversion and its place and meaning in the context of Christian mission in India. He deals with different types of conversion particularly in South India. He deals with the caste dynamics of Indian society and its impact on the day-to-day life of the Church. His theological conviction speaks of an essential link to liberation as a key concept in the process of conversion. I have referred to some case studies from the research of Andrew Wingate. He has aptly dealt with some aspects in relation to consolidation of converts through the establishment of mission compounds and to the creative tension between converts from the upper and untouchable class and caste.

Sunder Raj's book *'The Confusion called Conversion'* deals with allegations in India that missionaries are proselytizing through their power and money and alluring the ignorant and weaker sections of the Hindu community and thereby spoiling with a foreign faith the Indian culture and endangering social tranquility and national solidarity. He discusses this allegation in this book.

Joseph Prasad Pinto's book *'Inculturation through Basic Communities – An Indian Perspective':* The author has been a Roman Catholic priest and this book is a modified form of his doctoral dissertation in Rome. The idea of this book emerged when a devout Hindu 'Pradhan' (village head) asked him, being Indian, why he follows a foreign religion. He says, "The idea of basic Christian communities appealed me, because my fellow Christians were in a Diaspora situation, scattered in different corners, in small numbers, and without the facilities to come to the parish Church regularly. It was my pastoral interest, to facilitate the growth of small, living communities of faith, with intense personal life and self-evangelization." This book mainly reflects the evangelistic efforts in a pluralistic society like India with its distinct cultures.

Satianathan Clarke's book, *'Dalit and Christianity – Subaltern Religion and Liberation Theology in India:* Satianathan sets out to recollect the history of Dalit Indians with a view to enrich the inclusive, dialogical and liberative objectives of theology. He attempts

to tune into the subjugated knowledge of subaltern communities by studying the Paraiyar of South India, a major and specific community of Dalits (the untouchables or outcasts of India). He discusses Indian Christian theology and develops a Dalit perspective and draws two conclusions about Indian Christian theology: first, Indian theology tends to be exclusionary and non-dialogical by turning a deaf ear to the collective religious resources of the Dalits; second, in collaboration with the first aspect just alluded to, Indian Christian theology fosters the hegemonic objectives of the caste communities. In order to capture the dialogical, inclusive and liberative dimensions of theology, it is determined that the religious world of the Dalits must be re-collected and remembered.

An eighty-seven page document in the form of an appeal to the UNO conference in Durban in the year 2001 with title *'International Racism is the Child of India's Casteism – A historic perspective'* by the promoter of Dravidian Spiritual Movement Dr. M. Deivanayagam and Dr. Devakala is an interesting document. It deals with Aryan history in India and argues that it is Aryans who introduced racism in India and throughout the world.

J. Waskom Pickett's, *'Christian Mass Movement'* is another very rich book referred to in this study. In 1928 the National Christian Council of India, Burma and Ceylon met in Madras to consider two resolutions from constituent bodies calling for efforts to improve the quality of work done by churches and missions in mass movements. In the resultant deliberations, the interest of members and visitors brought mass movements to prominence. A resolution was passed that in close consultation with provincial Christian Councils, a study of the work in mass movement areas be carried out. This is a major work on the study of the mass movement. This work was carried out by the Institute of Social and Religious Research of New York with the instruction that "a comprehensive and thorough study of mass movements in selected areas with the end in view of evaluating their main results, for the guidance of the churches, missions and boards concerned in the revising of policies and the framing of constructive programmes". This is an important research, which I have used extensively in dealing with the motives of conversion of Indian masses.

Donald McGavaran's *"Understanding Church Growth"* is a well-known book in missiology. This book is not by any means the last word on the subject; rather, it is an attempt to take the reconciling of men to God in the Church of Jesus Christ seriously. It maintains throughout - and this is one of the stones in its theological foundation - that the establishment of Churches (assemblies of baptized believers) is pleasing to God. Furthermore it maintains throughout - and this is one of the stones in its anthropological foundation - that the size of the undiscipled are matters which, if the Christian is to be a good steward of God's grace, can be measured and must be known.

Robert J. Shreiter, *RECONCILIATION – Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order*. Shreiter in this book connects with the events in Eastern Europe, South Africa and Latin America a sample of political context that call for reconciliation at deeper level. What makes this book powerful is Shreter's emphasis on the narrative of the lie born in the situation of violence which enfold their victims in another's – the violent one's - reality. He makes a call to victims to fight violence through the redeeming narrative found in the gospel of Jesus. In and through the Christian message he highlights the importance of reconciliation and challenges the Church by asking question about their Spiritual capacity to become Minister of reconciliation.

Robert J. Shreiter, C.PP.S, *The Ministry of Reconciliation – Spirituality & Strategies*. This book is divided into two parts. He uses resurrection as a powerful symbol for building spirituality to counter the perpetrator who commits violence. By sharing a number of appearance stories of Jesus Shreiter make a call to the Church to develop a spirituality which presents them in the world as a resurrection people. The role of the Church in the reconciliation process can find its true meaning if the Risen Lord as victim and reconciler becomes a model of the spiritual Ministry of the Church in post apartheid South Africa. Shreiter in terms of the Church's active role in reconciliation suggests that Church has a message about reconciliation and spirituality, it has the power of rituals and capacity to create communities of reconciliation. He makes five points in relation to Paul's teaching on reconciliation: (1) Reconciliation is the work of God, who initiates and completes in us reconciliation through Christ. (2) Reconciliation is more a spirituality

than a strategy. (3) The experience of reconciliation makes of both victim and wrong doer a new creation. (4) The process of reconciliation that creates the new humanity is to be found in the story of passion, death and resurrection of Jesus. (5) The process of reconciliation will be fulfilled only with the complete consummation of the world by God in Christ.

Robert J. Shreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*: This book deals with the tension that emerges after the conversion of people from different races and cultural backgrounds into the Christian tradition. The emphasis is on contextualization. The importance of listening to different cultures from which converts have come into Christianity will enable the church to evolve local theologies. Various models of theologies are discussed in relation to the context in which Christianity has taken its roots. It is encouraged that local theologies must be given importance and only through such theology that the academicians should find their role as brokers or midwife trying to help in proper delivery of these theologies. The book does deal with the tradition and Christian identity and highlights the negative and positive approach to popular and official religion. The problem of syncretism and dual religious systems is also discussed.

Henry J.M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer*. This book deals with the question about ministry in contemporary society. The four chapters of this book highlight four different ways of approaching the problems of ministry in our time. The subjects covered in the book are: Ministry in a dislocated world, for a rootless generation, to a hopeless man and by a lonely ministry. The emphasis is on the importance of personal relationship in the ministry beyond the professional approach.

Bonganjalo Goba, 'An Agenda for Black theology' – Hermeneutics for Social Change: This book deals with the controversial subject of 'Doing theology' in South Africa, written during apartheid period. Goba aims to explore the challenge of Black theology by providing an agenda for the Black Christian community. A call is made to Christians to make a moral statement in support of the struggle for liberation. In five chapters Goba deals with the quest for theological/cultural revolution and theological relevancy of black

theology and makes demands for social change and change of oppressive structures in South Africa. An emphasis is made that the Church should demonstrate in a concrete way that Jesus' ministry as reflected in the gospel is a concrete response to the marginal and poor, the despised and rejected. He makes a call to move from Kairose to Praxis (communal praxis) highlighting the gospel of justice and peace. For him this will be of great help to the future of South Africa.

Allan Boesak, 'Farewell to innocence' – A Social-Ethical Study of Black Theology and Black Power: This book is rooted in the Black experience in South Africa. This book defines Black Consciousness, Black Power and Black Theology. These terms provide an identity to Africans not to be ashamed of their blackness but create a positive attitude and way of life in relation to their Black identity. The book deals critically with the white people's pseudo-innocence and makes a call to bid farewell to such innocence (superiority complex) and stop perpetuating racism, and to blacks not to tolerate the same. This book is a study on Black Theology and Black Power. The five chapters of this book establish the framework of Black theology, determining the understanding of Black Power and Black Theology, followed by a question raised about the possibility of Black Theology becoming an ideology if related to the concept of Black Power as Cone has developed it. The last chapter deals mainly with social-ethical point of view of Black theology concluding with the directive for an ethic of liberation as an ethic for Black theology.

Basil Moore (Ed), Black Theology – The South African Voice. This book contains essays on Black Theology from prominent theologians. The essays are intended to high light that the Black theology is in search of new symbols by which to affirm black humanity. It is a theology of the oppressed, by the oppressed, for the liberation of the oppressed. The writers in the book include James Cone, Sabelo, Steve Biko, Nyameko, Mokgethi Mollhabi, Omoyajowo, Manas Buthelezi, Mongameli,and Ananias Mpunzi.

However this does not limit the references in this study to a wide range of literature on the history of the Anglican Church in India and South Africa and related literature on

theology, ethics and human sciences. The readings also cover the subjects related with Hindu and African traditional religions. I have also used the study of Puranas, Upanishads, Vedic literature and Tamil Sangama (the study of the development of Tamil literature) in this study.

This study will be unusual not only for considering the secular meaning of conversion as identity formation but also in looking at converts who developed a deep spirituality for themselves which transcends the set doctrinal teachings of the Church.

1. 7 Conceptual framework – logical sequence of the chapters

Chapter two - There are many classifications by which to understand and analyze Indian society – class, caste, gender, language and race. This chapter will focus on the culture and social identity of a large group of Indian people based on the caste system. Especial attention will be paid to some of the enlightened people during different periods in the history of India who did not support the Indian social order based on caste, class and colour. The critics of the Hindu caste system were both Indian and Western people. They criticized Hinduism for perpetuating a social order based on the caste system in India. For them the caste system was an enslavement of the masses belonging to depressed communities. Hindu Casteism was oppressive and discriminatory. Through Casteism a culture of subjugation was introduced. The masses were placed under perpetual lower and untouchable status in India. And this was justified and codified by Hindu philosophy. Conversion to Christianity has made a great impact on the social and secular status of these people in India.

Chapter three - traces the origin of Christianity in India and records a brief history of the ministry of the Anglican Church in India. The story of South African Indian Anglican Christians is rooted in the ministry of the Anglican Church in India. There are also a few indentured Indians who came to South Africa from an Indian Syrian Christian background. The numbers of Indian converts in the Anglican Mission both in Durban and in Pietermaritzburg were never very great. The membership was mainly comprised of the Anglican converts who came from India.

Chapter four - will deal in detail with the process of the immigration of Indian people to South Africa and the ministry of the Anglican Church amongst Indians in the context of their social, religious, economical and political conditions. The history of Indians in South Africa is a story of perpetual discrimination. Their orientation into South Africa records a history of pain and humiliation, rejection, poverty and insecurity. It is observed that indentured Indians, in view of oppressive socio-economic and political circumstances in South Africa, were compelled to divert their total energy to the struggle for survival.

Chapter five - will record a brief history of Christianity in South Africa and the ministry of the Anglican Church amongst indentured labour. Indians from the time of their arrival in South Africa had to divert their energy towards survival in this country. It is observed that their presence sat uncomfortably in the psyche of both colonials and local South Africans. However, Indians made every attempt to become part of this country and to a great extent the process of such acculturation made a great impact on their culture. This chapter uses Govinden's work that has aptly drawn the attention to the services of Dr. Booth to the Indian community. A good number of Dr Booth's successors also made every attempt to bring the Gospel of Jesus to Indian people. The dedication of superintendents, assistant priests and lay workers (mostly women) is evidenced through the establishments of churches, educational institutions and a hospital in Natal. Most of these dedicated workers had a colonial upbringing and were not well aware of other cultures. Therefore there were no concerted efforts made by them to draw an appropriate mission paradigm in dealing with the Indian people who came from a distinct cultural background.

Chapter six - will look into the quest of converts and their hope and aspirations. This chapter deals in detail with the motives of conversion and its impact on the cultural identity of the converts. Change amongst human being is a result of crisis events and is a process that takes place in the total time-line of their life on earth. Motives of conversion in the Indian Context and in the context of Africa were rooted in the socio-psychological needs of the people. Lower caste or untouchable status in Hindu society in India and racial segregation in South Africa had crushed their humanity. A search for a new

respectable identity, selfhood, and an appropriate spiritual worldview to restore their humanity had drawn depressed Indian communities into Christianity. Eventually in the Christian faith they perceived a new sense of purpose and meaning for their lives. Conversion made a great impact on their personal behaviour in relation to the society.

This chapter highlights the religious conversion motives of the depressed communities in India and its impact on their cultural identity. These communities have lived with a degraded social identity in an oppressive caste culture in Indian society. Conversion into Christianity enabled them to construct a respectable cultural identity in society. Christianity helped them psychologically to move away from a depressed position into that of a healthy social being. In Christianity these converts experienced a positive characterization of their human identity. Therefore the impact of religious conversion on the cultural identity of converts is seen in their motives of conversion and in their desire to formulate a new respectable social identity.

Chapter seven - looks into the spirituality of converts through the lyrics and songs composed by them. These lyrics can be of great help for South African Anglican Indian Christians in formulating mission praxis. Through these lyrics they can connect with the spirituality of their forefathers who were beginning to define their new life and formulate a new value system for living in society as Christian people. These lyrics highlight the growing spiritual capacity of converts in dealing with their pain and suffering of the past through Christian teachings. It is in this process of spiritual growth that a call to repentance is made by them to their perpetrators who had instilled so much pain in their psyche through the Hindu caste system. These lyrics can be quite a powerful resource for South African Anglican Indian Christians to evolve in beginning to live as a resurrection people in New South Africa.

Chapter Eight - based on the converts' insight and discovery of a God of compassion who had delivered them from a painful life in an unjust social and religious structure: this chapter raises questions asking how this experience becomes a key to a new way of

living. What does this new way of living demand from a convert? This chapter looks critically at the Anglican ministry to Indians. The questions are raised

Had the Church particularly the Anglican Church been able to use the conversion experience of these converts for the mission praxis of the Church (both in India and South Africa) to draw other depressed communities into the love and care of Jesus Christ and his Church?

Have the converts living in the spirit of Jesus been able to make an authentic expression of their experience of liberation by trying to create a model community that participates in the liberation/reconciliation struggles through their life, witness and ministry?

The mission praxis must help the Church in equipping evangelists, pastors and religious educators with more innovative ways of doing mission beyond the traditional understanding of the church and its mission. The ministry of the Church must deal with the total life of the converts and use their conversion experience creatively in society. The converts can be wounded healers in the new South Africa.

Chapter Nine - is a case study which encourages the Church to help to uncover the deepest sense of longing and purpose of converts in the life of the Church. The Church has to closely watch how converts perceive, how they think, what about their stewardship of life, and with what attitude they exercise their faith? Have they been able to imply Christian teaching from a mission perspective: For example

From the Incarnational perspective – How converts understand - Why God was made flesh in Christ? Why the crucifixion and the resurrection? How do they view themselves in relation to other depressed people?

From the cultural perspective – Do they have the capacity to participate in nation building with other races in South Africa? Are they inclusive in their approach in dealing with the complex racial and religious issues in post apartheid South Africa?

From the Social perspective - How do they understand their new identity and their unique experience of Jesus Christ in dealing with both 'sinners' and 'sinned against'?

From the Spiritual perspective - Have they become an exclusive and self-centred community? Where does their spirituality lead them?

The need for both South African Indian Anglican Christians and ethnic South African Anglican Christians to work together towards the transformation and articulation of their Christian experience in the new South Africa is highlighted.

The Summary will sum up this thesis and will highlight the way I view the impact of religious conversion on the cultural identity of Indian converts.

CHAPTER TWO

South African Indian Anglican Christians before migration to South Africa

2. 1 Introduction

The meanings of conversion are rooted in the personal histories of people as they shift their allegiance from one tradition to another. In the study of cultural history, social structure is important. In the Indian context social structure requires studies of the caste system, which controls and guides the different units of the society in their interrelationships, their beliefs, superstitions, customs, conventions, systems of marriage, family, etc.

In the previous chapter, I pointed out that converts from India came from a complex cultural background. In general there are different classifications by which to understand and analyze Indian society – class, caste, gender, language and race. However, this study will utilize the caste aspect of the society to understand the cultural life of the converts. Indian social reality is understood through the fourfold caste system and the fifth group of people identified as the outcastes or untouchables.

This chapter will focus on the culture and social identity of a large group of Indian people based on the caste system. Especial attention will be paid to some of the enlightened people during different periods in the history of India who did not support the Indian social order based on caste, class and colour. The critiques of casteism were both Indian and Western people. They criticized Hinduism for perpetuating the caste system in India. For them caste system was an enslavement of the masses. Hindu Casteism was oppressive and discriminatory. Through Casteism a culture of subjugation was introduced. The masses were placed under perpetual lower and untouchable status in India. And this was justified and codified by Hindu philosophy.

Christian mission in India had entered into a complex cultural context. Therefore, no straightjacket approach can be possible in describing the impact of religious conversion

on cultural identity of Indian converts. The story of conversion of the South African Indian Anglican Christians is complex. While explaining the conversion experience and the converts' new identity in relation to their old cultural affiliation, both the Church and the converts are left either in confusion or with an inadequate explanation about the impact of conversion. It becomes more difficult when the motives behind these conversions are discussed in relation to the cultural identity of converts in the peculiar social and religious milieu of India.

However it is evident that conversion into Christianity has made a great impact on the social and secular status of Indian people. Most converts belonged to the depressed community in India. They were considered to be the so-called lower caste and outcaste or untouchables of India. The call to Conversion into Christianity offered them an opportunity to break the shackles of slavery from a casteist Hinduism. This was a unique opportunity to change their culture of subjugation to a culture of freedom and liberty. The new religion offered them a respectable social life and comparatively a hope for a better future.

In Hinduism, culture and religion overlap. Therefore this transition from a Hindu tradition to a Christian tradition had been a painful process for converts. Their affiliation to the Christian faith had been socially very strenuous and psychologically quite demanding. They were extricated by Hindus from the society and from their own people. And this is evident even today, where both the Church and Indian Christian theologians are left with quite a difficult task to interpret, explain and understand the impact that religious conversion has had in the cultural life of Indian Christians. Hence this study is part of an ongoing process of reciprocal and critical interpretation and assimilation between converts, their old traditions and their newfound faith in the life of the Church.

A brief outline of the social and cultural history of the Indian people will help us to understand the dynamics of the conversion of masses into the Christian faith. This will also be helpful to touch the roots of South African Indian Anglican Christians.

2. 2 Physical Setting of India

Indian history is dominated by invasions from people of North-West. The mighty Himalayas Mountain does separate India by shutting the north and separating the rest of Asia. However it stands vulnerable due to number of passes such Khyber and Bolan.

> "Through them have poured in several invaders from time to time: the Aryans (2000/1500 B.C), the Persians (6 c. B.C.), the Greeks (4 c. B.C.), the Scythians (Bactrians, Parthians, Sakas, 2-1 cc. B.C.-180 B.C.), Kushans, 1 c. A.D.), the Huns (Hunas and Gujaras, 5 c. A.D.) and Muslims (12-18 c. A.D.). It is the British who closed and fortified the passes". (Mundadan, 1989: 9)

These invaders had a great influence on Indian culture and life patterns particularly in the formation of the religious, social, economic and political character of the country.

Separating northern from central India there runs a broad belt of forest-clad mountains, the Vidhya and Satputra ranges, which follow the Naramada River.

> "The land between this area and the Krishna River comprises the plateau of the Deccan (Dakshina-Patha or Southland). The Marathas, the chief inhabitants of the Deccan, are a mixed race, being the offspring of intermarriages between invaders from the north and the original inhabitants". (Mundadan, 1989, 14)

South of the River Krishna lies Dravidian or Tamil (Tamilicam) country: Its inhabitants, the Dravidians, have developed independently along their own lines.

> "South India has always had a distinct geographical position cut off as she is from the north by the great natural barriers between them". (Mundadan, 1989: 14)

The bulk of the population in these parts retained their own language and customs, but these were enriched and refined by contact with northern culture.

Kerala or Malayalam are the chief names given to the narrow strip of land which lies between the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea, stretching from Cape Comorin about 359 miles northwards.

North East India is linked with rest of India through the northern part of West Bengal and consists of seven states.

Six main races have been identified in the Indian subcontinent. These are Negrito, Proto-Australoid, the Mongoloid, The Mediterranean and those associated with Aryan culture. The Dravidian culture is associated with Mediterranean race. The last people who came are commonly referred to as Aryans who entered through North India.

2. 3 The Aryans

There are two separate sources of information on the past Vedic literature and traditional stories of Puranas.

> "Vedic literature or Vedas – which means knowledge of that which was before unknown, and the traditional … stories of Puranas (which means first or eternal). (Thapar 1966: 29)

However Puranas were composed at the latter date than Vedas and therefore for a long time they were not considered authentic source on Indian history. They are now considered to be important source in shading light on Indian social history.

The term Aryan is a linguistic term which indicates a speech-group of Indo-European origin, and is not an ethnic term.

> "To refer to the coming of the Aryans is therefore inaccurate. However, this inaccuracy has become so current in historical studies of early India that it would sound unduly pedantic to refer to the Aryans as 'the Aryan-speaking people'.

Their ethnic identity is not known on the basis of the Indian evidences". (Thapar 1966: 27)

There was a tradition that the first King of India was,

"Manu Svayabhu (The self born Manu)...a hermaphrodite...had nine sons, the eldest of whom was a hermaphrodite – hence known by dual name ILa and ILa. From this son arose the two main lines of royal descent, the Solar dynasty (Surysvansha) from ILa and the Lunar dynasty (Chandravansha) from ILa". (Thapar 1966: 28)

But in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries another type of evidence provided historical material, which conflicted with the traditional story. This was based on the evidence philology. Sanskrit language was associated with Greek and Latin and this led to the theory

"Of a common language originally spoken by the Indo-European people the ancestors of the Aryan-speaking tribes. The Indo-Europeans emerged from the range of the Caspian Sea and the Southern Russian steppes, and gradually divided into a number of tribes, which spread far afield in search of pasture, to Greece and Asia Minor, to Iran and to India, by which time they were called 'Aryans'. Vedic literature (that associated with the Aryans in India) came in for intensive study, and it appeared to be proved that the beginning of Indian history was to be the coming of the 'Aryans', some time in the second millennium". (Thapar 1966: 29)

But this carefully constructed picture of the past was again disturbed in the 20th century. The Archaeological discovery in 1921-22 in the north-west of India revealed that there was in existence a pre-Aryan civilization. This was the Indus Valley civilization with its two urban centres called Mohanjodaro and Harrapa.

"This discovery consigns the early part of the traditional account very firmly to the realms of mythology. The Harrapa culture dates from c. 3000B.C. to c. 1500 B.C. so that the physical coexistence of the Harappa culture with the family of Manu is difficult to imagine, since the cultural patterns of the two were totally different". (Thapar 1966: 29)

In short, the Aryans came as semi-nomadic pastoralists living chiefly on the produce of cattle, and for some time cattle rearing remained their main occupation. The cow was the measure of value and was a very precious commodity. However the more permanent settling-down of the tribes led to a change of occupation. From tending the herds of cattle they took to agriculture and agriculture led to trade. They cleared the forest in the Ganges Valley and established themselves as agrarian community. They developed an advanced agrarian system. And eventually this settlement resulted into creation of a powerful kingdom,

"Deriving revenue from agriculture; and these were to dominate the history of northern India for many centuries". (Thapar, 1966, 48)

A trading community arose from an originally landowning section of society. These developments led to the birth of political organization with patriarchal groups each having tribal leader, a community administered by 'Sabha' (council of the tribal leader) and 'Samiti' (general assembly of the entire tribe). In order to protect the tribes from war a king was elected primarily as a military leader.

2. 4 The Dravidians

In the South peninsula a different set of cultures, or some would say civilization, was taking shape. This was expressed in the Tamil language which, unlike Sanskrit, is not an Indo–European language, but is one of an independent linguistic family called Dravidian that now includes some 150 million speakers, about one-fifth of the contemporary population of India.

In the 20th century, Sanskrit scholars like Dr. Burrow, Dr. Emanuel and Sir Ralph Turner, who failed to trace certain words in Sanskrit to Indo-European sources, were able to trace their origin to Dravidian or Munda - the languages with which the speakers of the Indo-Aryan languages came into contact when coming to India.

> "Dr. Burrow has found Dravidian words in the Vedas themselves but, as he points out, the borrowings were almost negligible until a later period. All these studies lead to the conclusion that Dravidians were in India before the coming of the speakers of Aryan languages" (Tirukkural s.a: 728).

There had been a continued veiled conflict between Aryan and Pre-Aryan (Dravidian) culture. However the Dravidian never triumphed over the Aryan. The impact of Aryan through Veda can be seen in the philosophical teachings of Indian culture.

2. 5 Vedic Period – and its impact on social order of Indian Society

The Vedic period in the history of India is the period of the historical reconstruction of Aryan life and institution based on the earliest literary source, the 'Rig-Veda', parts of which were originally composed prior to 1000 B.C. The remaining Vedic literature – the Sama, Yajur and Atharva Vedas – is of a later date. The two epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, are concerned with events which took place between c.1000 and 700 B.C. The Vedic period is popularly thought of as a glorious age of the distant past: the age when gods mingled with men and when men were heroes and defenders of righteousness.

Though Indian history is affected by divergent forces, but Aryan culture has made a major impact in India society. The major contribution of Aryan culture in India is caste system. The major contribution of Vedic culture is seen in the sphere of social institutions and Hindu religion. People who consider themselves upper caste trace their origin to Aryan beginning.

> "What was immutable in Indian society was not freedom or slavery, but caste". (Thapar, 1966: 77)

2.5. 1 The Origin of Casteism

The earliest religious ideas of the Aryans were those of a primitive animism where the forces around them, which they could not control or understand, were invested with divinity and were personified as male or female gods. However, the central feature of Aryan religious life was 'sacrifice'. The caste system was introduced to differentiate between the natives who called by Aryans Dasas or Slaves having dark skins. These natives were the original inhabitant in India and are known today as the Dravidians. Sama, Yajur and Atharva Vedas are of later date. The doctrine of Karma (action) provided a philosophical justification for caste, which eventually came to be systematized in the broader concept of Dharma (natural law).

The social order in India had been shaped through the famous Rig Vedic hymn the Hymn of Man called *"Purusa-Sukta".*

> "In this famous hymn, the gods create the world by dismembering the cosmic giant, Purusa, the primeval male who is the victim of a Vedic sacrifice …Though the theme of the cosmic sacrifice is a widespread mythological motif, this hymn is part of a particularly Indo-European corpus of myths of dismemberment". (Rig veda, translated by Radice, 1994: 29)

The underlying concept is, therefore, quite ancient;

> "Yet the fact that this is one of the latest hymns in the Rig Veda is evident from its reference to the three Vedas (v. 9) and to the four social classes (caste or jatis) or Varnas (colours) (v. 12). This is the first time that this concept appears in Indian civilization, as well as from its generally monistic world-view". (Radice, 1994: 30)

It is recorded that this cosmic sacrifice "Purusa", ensues in life and order.

> "There can be no life without sacrifice, and the divisions of the World Soul are
> seen as the basis of the human order. Through this sacrifice of Purusa they divided
> the Man; into how many parts did they apportion him? What do they call his
> mouth, his two arms and thighs and feet? In verse 12 of Rig Veda, his mouth
> became the Brahmin, his arms were made into warriors, his thighs the people, and
> from his feet the servants were born". (Radice, 1994: 31)

The origin of the social order and division of people from the dismembering of this
World Soul Purusa, is placed in the social hierarchy as,

> "The mouth is the priestly order (the Brahmins), the arms are the rulers (Rajanya, later
> known as the Kshatriya), the thighs are the land-owners, merchants and bankers
> (called the Vaishya) and the feet are the workers, artisans and serfs (Shudra)".
> (Handbook, 1991: 175)

It is likely that the Shudras represented the subject-peoples who came from the
indigenous population and were subordinated to the conquering Aryans.

It is through this four class groupings of the poem on creation the idea grew that
hierarchic structure in society is a part of divine intention for the natural order.

> "The concept of 'Jati' (caste – literally, 'birth") and 'Varna' (Sanskrit for 'colour')
> gave birth to different classes in the society, which eventually proliferated into a
> large number of birth groups (jatis) that differentiated families much more
> according to work done in the community… The first three classes are cut off
> from the fourth by being "twice born" or "initiated". (Handbook, 1991, 175-176)

The caste system in contemporary India is outlawed by the Indian government. However this system continues to affect the social life of Indian society. The practice of caste system is still prevalent. Marriage and eating are still governed by caste and class system.

In Indian society there exists a fifth group. They are Pariahs or Untouchables or outcaste. This group has no caste.

Anantray J. Rawal in his book "Indian Society Religion and Mythology" (a study of the Brahmavaivartapurana) use the 'Puranas', to explain that the caste and class system in India is deeply rooted in Hindu religious system. Brahmans formed the first and the foremost order of Hindu society.

> "They not only claim almost divine honour as their birthright but also in general the three other classes submit readily to their authority, and hence the Brahmins claim superiority over all". (Rawal, 1982: 28)

The Jesuit sources also confirm that in Tamil Nadu the Brahaman in general were proud and arrogant people. And people in general believe that

> "The whole world is under control of the gods. Those gods are under the control of the prayers (mantras). Those prayers are under the control of the Brahamans. Therefore the Brahamans are our gods." (Subramanian, 1994, 33)

The Kshatriyas (Ruling class) form the next order of the society. This group is the ruling class who are to take care of the people of their state like their own children.

Vaishyas constitute the third order of society. It is observed that the function of this community was to trade, agriculture, worship of the Brahmins and God.

Shudras "form the fourth order of the society and,

> "Their special duty is the service of the Brahmins (3.35.73, 3.35.87, 4.59.66, 4.83.75.Dharmashastra).This is also in accordance with the rules of the Dharmashastras". (Rawal, 1982, 31)

However, R.S. Sharma in an article quoted by Srimali mentions that changes in the status and the concept of the shudra Varna in the early middle-ages, shows that

> "In later Vedic times shudras constituted a small servile class of defeated and dispossessed Aryans and non-Aryans employed in domestic work. In the Post-Vedic and Mauryan times they were employed in agricultural labour on a large scale and their disability and servility increased. During this period, some indigenous tribal groups were absorbed in the rank of the shudras but the majority of such tribal were accommodated in the second and third strata of society as warriors and peasants, i.e. kshatriyas and shudras". (Srimali, 1994: 160)

V.N. Jha in his study of Varnasamkara in the Dharma Sutras: (these terms appear in Baudhayana Dharma Sutra and Samkara in the Gautama Dharma Sutra) speaks about certain castes that originate from miscegenation among the members of the above four caste (jati) or classes (varna). These Sutras,

> "Conceive of hypergamous unions which they term *anuloma* viz., in accordance with the direction of hair or in the natural order. They also speak of *hypogamous* unions called *Pratiloma*, viz., against the hair or in the inverse order…the progeny of *pratiloma unions* are considered lower in status than either of the two parents…The Dharma Sutras identify castes in society which, according to them, were produced as a result of interbreeding at different and specific varna (class) levels…But "The Dharma Sutras do not agree about the number, names, classification and details of derivation of the so-called mixed castes". (Shrimali, 1994: 85-88)

Strangely, the Dharma Sutras are punctilious in naming and ascribing particular origins to the so-called mixed castes. However Brahamans always considered themselves at the top of the social order. Mixture with Sudra blood and mixed castes at various levels were considered to be polluting and were kept at various levels in the society.

Shrimali mentions three categories of people combined to produce the phenomenon of mixed castes.

> " (1) less assimilated backward aboriginals, (2) degraded artisans, and (3) groups which through infringement of caste rules or otherwise (association with a region outside the pale of Brahmanism, for example) have lost their Aryan status". (Shrimali, 1994: 95)

Brahamans were given autonomy to create various categories of people in the society. A number of exterior groups were imbedded in Aryan order of society which helped,

> "… the formation of new castes, and was adopted and expanded by future law givers, Manu himself enumerating 61 mixed castes and the number rising to more than a hundred later on". (Shrimali, 1994: 95)

2.5.2 Doubts and Voices against Casteism

The caste element perpetuated by the creation hymn in the Veda had created doubts in the minds of people. This doubt led to a wider spirit of inquiry. Some people started living as ascetics, withdrawing from the community and living either as hermits or in small groups away from centres of habitation. However such ascetics were genuinely seeking answers to certain fundamental questions, which are recorded in the 'Upanishads' (which means 'at the feet of the master' and are considered to be the commentary on the Vedas). The 'Upanishads' were the source of many of the later systems of thought in Hinduism.

Romila Thapar with reference to this wider spirit of inquiry mentions that Ascetism might have had two purposes,

"…to acquire mysterious powers by practicing physical austerities and meditation, or to seek freedom from having to adjust to society by physically withdrawing from it, as evident from the denial of Vedic rituals and the unconventional customs of some groups of aesthetics, for example nudism". (Thapar, 1966: 46)

Another reason for this desire to remove oneself from the community derived from the old traditions and structures of early Aryan society that had changed by the seventh century B.C. The tribal communities were giving way to more stable republics and monarchies with strong political ambitions. This atmosphere produced,

"The political doctrine of *matsyanyaya*, unbridled competition in which the powerful preyed upon the weak without restraint…however, the ascetics did not spend all their time isolated in forests or on mountaintops. Some of them returned to their communities and challenged the existing social religious norms". (Thapar, 1966: 46-47)

Thapar further says that even in the preceding centuries there have been conflicting views between tribal organizations and new political phenomena called monarchy. When tribal started settling down permanently geographical identity and order of the society was finding concrete shape. There were emerging political organization to give shape to such settlements of the tribes. There were two political organizations that emerged in this processes. They were 'republic' and 'monarchy'. Republic was non-brahamanic order. Monarchy was influenced by Brahaman tradition and culture.

The republics consisted of either a single tribe such as the Shakyas, Koliyas and Mallas, or a confederacy of tribes such as Vrijis and Yadavs.

"The republics had emerged from the Vedic tribes and retained much more tribal tradition than did the monarchy…… they (republics) could not afford to accept brahaman political theories. Perhaps the most striking of the non brahaman

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theories was the Buddhist account of the origin of the state, possibly the earliest expression of theory in social contract…". (Thapar, 1966: 50-51)

The social contract included a declaration people will live in complete harmony. Every thing will be provided for them. The society will be managed by one person called Great Elect Mahasmanta who will rule and maintain justice.

The republics were less opposed to individualistic and independent opinion than the monarchies and were ready to tolerate unorthodox views. The republics produced two leaders called GautamBuddh from Shakya tribe and Mahavira from Jnatrika tribe. The teachings of these two leaders gave birth to two heterodox sects. Through Buddha's teaching emerged Buddhism and Mahavira was the founder of Jainism.

GautamBuddh introduced the philosophy of 'Dhamma' "(Dhamma is the Prakrit form of the Sanskrit word Dharma, meaning, according to the context, the universal law or righteousness or, by extension, the social and religious order as found in Hindu society).

"However the word had a much more general connotation at the time and Emperor Ashoka used it in a very wide sense…". (Thapar, 1966: 85)

The entire sub-continent had come under the Mauryan Empire and under the Mauryan King, Ashoka. The philosophy of Dhamma or Dharma was interpreted as the function (dharma) of the king to protect and maintain the social order. Though the intention of the king was to introduce a greater unity in the Empire through the philosophy of Dharma, loyalty to the social order actuated at a local level, largely through the institution of caste, contributed to an absence of a wider unity in the empire.

The philosophy of 'Ahimsa' (non-violence) introduced by Mahavira (Jainism) prevented agriculturalists from being Jainas…thus,

"Jainism came to be associated with the spread of urban culture". (Thapar, 1966: 65)

However, with the conversion of King Ashoka after the Kalinga war (Kalinga was located on the east coast – modern Orissa) to Buddhism, the philosophy of Ahimsa (non-violence) was understood as another fundamental principle of Dhamma or Dharma. Ahimsa implied both a renunciation of war and conquest by violence and a restraint on the killing of animals. Out of these two heterodox sects (Jainism and Budhism) Buddhism became the more famous.

Buddhism and Jainism, though they did not directly attack the caste system, were nevertheless opposed to it and can, to that extent, are described as non-caste sects. This provided an opportunity for those of low caste to opt out of their caste by joining a non-caste sect. The pattern of association of these two heterodoxies – Buddhism and Jainism – with urban centres and largely with the lower castes was repeated in the later centuries with the various phases of what came to be called the Bhakti Movement. This pattern had been repeated in India in 1960. A large number of people from a socially down trodden section of western Indian a state called Maharashtra had been converted to Buddhism.

" In 1951, there was total of 2,487 Buddhists in India. The 1961 census reports a total of 3,250,277. Rural Maharashtra claims over two million of these Buddhists who are largely converts from the untouchable castes, or scheduled castes as they have been called in recent years…". (Thapar, 1966: 68)

Classical Sanskrit became gradually and increasingly the language of the Brahaman or learned few and had a restricted use on certain occasions such as the issuing of proclamations or official documents, and during Vedic ceremonies. In the towns and villages a popular form of Sanskrit called Prakrit was spoken. This had a local variation; the chief variety was called Shauraseni and the eastern variety, Magadhi. Pali was another language based on Sanskrit and commonly used in this region.

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2.5. 3 Expansion and Formulation of Aryan Social Order

Dravidian or Tamil people in South India have developed their own language called "Tamil" one of the most ancient written and spoken languages used by people today in India. However some Aryans as part of their desire for expansion beyond north started moving towards South India. Romila Thapar in her study records that,

> "The southward movement of the Aryans is generally dated to 880B.C. The original Ramayana (story of the king Rama and his fight with Ravana - the king of Lanka (Ceylon)) must have been composed at least fifty or hundred years later. An earlier date for the original Ramayana is possible if it is conceded that the conflict between Rama and Ravana is a description of local agriculturists of the Ganges Valley and the more primitive hunting and food gathering societies of the Vindhyan Region. The transference of these events to a more southerly location and the reference to Ceylon may have been the work of an editor of a later period". (Thapar, 1966: 33)

It is important to note that the Aryans were keen to incorporate the Dravidian or Tamil people in their Hindu system. They started learning the Tamil language and local customs as part of their strategy to create a,

> "… new composite social order … and to find more or less suitable places in their elastic pantheon for many gods and goddesses cherished by the pre-Aryan people". (Mundadan, 1994: 14)

Eventually the decline of the tribal culture, in combination with growing dependency on the agrarian economy, stimulated the growth of monarchies. The monarchy system, which leant heavily on religious orthodoxy, tended slowly to blur the concept of the state, and instead loyalty was directed to the social order. In texts of political theory the highest authority on the empirical plane was the king and the government, and, on the abstract

plane, 'Dhamma' (a sacred word of India, meaning, according to the context, the Universal law to Righteousness or, by extension, a social and religious order as founded in Hindu society). Eventually "Dharma" replaced the idea of state. Even a divine king was no longer infallible, because an unrighteous king could be removed. A king's function or (dharma) was to protect and maintain the social order. This concept of Dharma to maintain social order,

> "…obtained its sanctions from divine sources, which made it all the more imperative to defend it as a sacred duty. Loyalty to the social Order was actuated at a local level, largely through the institution of caste, and this in turn contributed to an absence of a wider unity". (Thapar, 1966: 91)

In recent times the Dravidian Spiritual Movement points out that this sacred concept "Dharma" was corrupted by

> "Varnashrama Dharma and Manu Dharma Sastra of the Aryans: Dhamma or Dharma was introduced by Lord Buddha, which meant compassion and love for others. While for Aryans "the term Dharma in Varnaashrma Dharma justifies violence, hence it is anti–dharma or adharma. And out of this adharma arise oppression, slavery and annihilation". (Deivanayagam, 2001: 16)

However some modern Indian intellectuals like Chaturvedi Badrinath argue in defence of Indian social system. He says,

> "The true identity of Indian civilization has been 'Dharmik' and not 'Hindu'…. The one concern from which everything in Indian thought flowed, and on which every movement of life ultimately depended, is 'Dharma', order. Not any positivistic order but the order that is inherent in all… it is a secular view of life, not a 'religious' one: but it is not secularism either. It cuts across the religious-secular polarity of western thought. One **Dharmic** principle is that every being has a right to live and every individual the right to order his or her own life

according to his or her temperament, capacity and circumstance". (Badrinath, 1993: 3)

However, for the shudras or low caste or untouchables, their capacity and circumstances historically governed by the Aryan/Brahamnic order, the concept and definition of dharma remains an illusion. What they needed was a simple principle, which could help them in alleviating their low social and human status. Western religion and to a great extent Buddhism and Jainism and other non-caste sects did offer a better living human order to them. And they found these new religions friendly and acceptable.

2. 6 Background of South African Anglican Indian Christians

2. 6. 1 The Dravidians

Indian South African Anglican Christians have come mainly from South India and mostly from a Tamil (the word Tamil means sweet, beauty and naturalness) background and the Dravidian culture.

Social history, as one of the South Indian historians K. K. Pillay deems it,

> "Primarily concerns itself with the daily life of the people in the past, the character of family and household life… It comprises human as well as economic relations of different classes to one another, the social stratification and groups, occupations, crafts and trades, the conditions of labour and leisure, the attitude of man to nature, the culture of each age as it arose out of those general conditions of life and the reflection of this culture on religion, literature, music, dance, architecture, learning and thought. Intimately connected with these, there appears the history of ideals and aspirations, of manners, customs and beliefs and superstition". (Subramanian, 1996: 2)

In India the social, economic, religious, and political life of the poor masses were influenced by the Aryan regulations and rules classified through "Varnashrama Dharma

and Manu Dharma Sastra". According to which the white-coloured invaders were considered superior and non-white Dravidians, inferior.

Dr. M. Deivanayagam and Dr. D. Devakala of the Dravidian Spiritual Movement in India in their appeal to UNO in August 2001 through their document "International Racism is the Child of India's Casteism - A Historical Perspective" point out that

> "Dravidians were the victims of racial and caste discrimination devised and imposed by the Aryans in India". (Deivanayagam, 2001: 8)

The Dravidian spiritual movement on the one hand criticizes British in India for using "Manu Dharma Sastra" as the book of 'Hindu Law' and on the other hand argues that Hinduism is Dravidians' religion.

The Dravidian Spiritual Movement further observes that the Hindu religions in India are Jainism, Buddhism, Saivism, Vaishnavism and Sikhism. Sikhism developed during a later period.

The Adi Sankara, by his 'Advaitic Philosophy' and the establishment of five mutts, undertook the spadework to bring Indian society under the control of the Aryan priestly class.

> "In all societies there are priests. In the same manner in the Aryan society also there were priests. The Advaita philosophy created a new title 'Brahman' for the priests of the Aryans… Brahma happens to be one of the three names of the trio-Gods of the Dravidian six-fold religions, namely Siva, Vishnu and Brahma. Those who glorify Siva are 'Saivites'. Those who glorify Vishnu are 'Vaishnavites'. Those who glorify Brahma are 'Brahamans'. In the Aryan Vedas there is no God in the name of Brahma". (Deivanayagam, 2001:18)

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This was done by the twisted commentary of the Dravidian literature and Adi Sankara misinterpreted the scriptural saying 'Aham Brahamsami' as ' I am God' to suit his ideology. According to his interpretation, Brahamins alone can claim that they are 'Gods'. The Dravidian Spiritual movement believe that

> "**Adi Sankara** was hypocritically making use of the trinity doctrine (Siva, Vishnu, Brahma) of Savism and Vaishanism, smearing holy ashes of Saivism on his forehead, and pronouncing the name "Narayana" of Vaishnavism, and claiming that he was a Brahmin at heart, but worshipped fire". (Devanayagam, 2001:13-14)

They argue that

> "Aryans were the followers of fire worship. Being an Aryan and fire worshipper Adi Sankara accomplished his task of bringing Indian society as followers of fire worshippers. By diluting the *monotheistic concept* of Saivism and Vashnavism and twisting the concept of the cycles of birth of Jainism and Buddhism he devised Monism, which upgrades the Brahmans as superior by birth as per Adavaita Philosophy". (Deivanayagam, 2001: 3)

According to the Dravidian Spiritual movement, Adi Sankara tried to corrupt Buddhism, Jainism, Saivism and Vaishnavism and endeavoured to bring them under the clutches of Brahmanism; eventually Brahamans captured all Saivite and Vaishnavite temples.

> "It is Advaita Philosophy which has converted the occupational hierarchy of a class structure into a caste system with religious sanctions". (Deivanayagam, 2001, 18)

2. 6. 2 Caste system in South India

In North India people are divided into four castes. In South India caste is more complex in terms of categorizing. Abbe Dubois in his stay in South India observed these complex caste phenomena,

> "… of all the provinces I lived in, the Dravidian or the Tamil country is the one where the ramification of caste, appeared to me most numerous". (Subramanian, 1994:30)

In South India there is a large group of people who are identified as Pariahs, people having no caste or outcast or untouchables. Mass converts into Christianity from South India are mainly people from untouchable background.

Fr. De Costa who travelled extensively and observed men and matters keenly in South India preferred to divide Tamil community,

> " … into three groups as higher, middle and lower - giving the first place to the Brahamans, the second to Rajahs (Ksatriyas), Komatis (Vaisyas) and Sudras and the last to Pariahs who were untouchables". (Subramanian, 1994: 32)

Brahamans who migrated to South India from North were teachers and enlightened landowners. There had been a school of thought which said that the Tamil community was divided into Brahamans and Sudras communities. However this view is refuted by sociologists.

There is a complex understanding of the Sudra community in South India. The Sudra is divided into two categories called 'Sat Sudra' and 'Asat Sudra'.

> "… In terms of power and prestige early medieval India as a whole developed a social system having three broad strata, the Brahman, the kshatriya or Rajput and

the Sudra in the north and the Brahaman, the Sat-Sudra and the Asat-Sudra in the South…". (Shrimali, 1994:163)

In South India therefore,

"The distinction between the Sat and the Asat Sudras lay in the demarcation of peasant communities from the culturally backward tribes and artisans groups dependant on the land-owning peasantry for their subsistence. The gulf was wide enough for the postulation of even a fifth class (Varna) as is indicated by a comment of Sankara". (Shrimali, 1994: 163)

On the other hand, a number of epigraphs show that birth in the high-ranking Sudra castes was not considered low since in actual practice it ranked next to Brahamans.

"The Sudra rulers appear as zealous patrons of the Brahamans and the institution of caste and express pride in having been born from the feet of Vishnu. Some even assumed Brahman gotras". (Shrimali, 1994: 163)

It is argued that

"The non-emergence of Ksatriyas or Rajput Varna in … Southern India was due to the fact that there was no conquering elite which might seek to preserve its identity through putative Ksatriya status by forging kinship relations horizontally through widespread marriage networks, rather than vertically, in the absence of traditional local roots". (Shrimali, 1994: 163-164)

The complexity of the caste system is further realized in South India that Pre-Aryan community was casteist community. N Subramanian argues on the existence of casteism in South India by saying that an institution of such dimensions and potentialities,

"Cannot be the product of a group of people, however crafty and scheming they might be…. Caste systems of one form or the other existed even in the pre-Aryans Tamil society. Even in Tolkappiyam, there is a reference to four divisions of Tamil society namely Antanar, Aracar, Vanikar and Velalar. Puranamuru also refers to the four castes: "Verrumai terinta narpalullum…". (Subramanian, 1994: 30)

The important factor of the caste system in South India was the vertical social framework starting from Brahaman and reaching down to the Sudras. It was evidently,

"…the Varna (colour) system; and the number of endogamous and exogamous considerations which divide the society into many water tight compartments (non-intermarrying and non-interdinning) are the caste part of it". (Subramanian, 1994: 30-31)

The division of people horizontally according to occupation is not peculiar to Tamil society alone. A fundamental pattern of organization on the basis of small endogamous groups has been in existence since Palaeolithic times. This pattern was developed through,

"… Kinship as the basis for organizing the reciprocal behaviours of the group members… this might have influenced the primitive tribal social organization in South India in Palaeolithic times". (Subramanian, 1994, 31)

Social division based on occupations already existed during the pre-Aryan and Cankam days.

"Brahamans due to their learning, piety and their 'oft-used exasperating' tongue were greatly respected, their sacrifices greatly acclaimed and their nanmarai, eluthak karpu, greatly adored. They carried on their mission with great zest and

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zeal with their nul, uri mukkol and mania. They were deemed to be parppanar (seers) and hence became Acans, Arakkalattu antanar and the head of Aimperumulu of the Cankam Kings who impressed by their learning and piety favoured them with separate quarters". (Subramanian, 1994: 31)

The special feature of the caste system in South India was the concept of pollution (based on the nature of their work), which formed the basis of Hindu society. In Tamil country, no Hindu of a decent caste touches an outcast. Even his presence would pollute a Brahaman and other higher caste Hindus. According to Abbe Dubois

"In some places, even their foot prints were deemed to defile the whole neighbourhood". (Subramanian, 1994: 47)

With regard to pollution, there were gradations, which depended upon the status of a particular caste in the social hierarchy. Ceremonies like funerals, marriages were restricted and separated from other clean castes or upper castes. Their residential segregation was arranged in specific villages with a particular style of housing preserving their distinct features. Further, the caste regulated its members through its councils or Sabha. In matters of social administration, each caste was an autonomous unit headed by a headman who was variously known as *Ur kavantan periya Tannakkaran Nattanmaikkaran kariyastan,* and was usually assisted by a peon *kolkaran,* and some time by a sort of vice-headman, *karikkaran.* The lower castes were further subjected to caste discipline and rigorous penalties and fines were imposed. A doctrine was further elaborated that certain castes keep distance between themselves and Brahamanas.

In the census of 1931 Hutton has recorded,

"… in the district of Tinnevelly there was a class of "Unseeables" - a caste of washer man known as *Parata Vannan* who washed the clothes of the untouchables and were therefore deemed to be doubly polluting. They had to work in between midnight and day break and were not allowed to come out

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during the day time because the very sight of them was deemed to be polluting". (Subramanian, 1994: 48)

The system of pollution was more intensive in South India than in the North due to the fact that North India was the meeting place of various invasions and races. The disruption through invasion brought different caste together to deal with the issues of survival. Hence the caste system was not intact there. The Muslim and other invasions had left a deep mark on the social life of the North India. Muslim way of life had considerable influence on many Indian people. The caste system was offered changes; hence its traditional rigors were relaxed. In the Tamil country such things did not happen, therefore *acara (caste system)* was more intense here than in the North.

However, in the 19th and 20th centuries the traditional set-up was in peril owing to certain exotic forces and values, which were introduced by alien rule. The introduction of English education, new legal codes, new and large scale industries and the growth of big towns and cities with all their European paraphernalia created a commotion, which affected the gamut of the Hindu body politic. The establishment of British courts and the introduction of uniform criminal law removed from the purview of the caste councils many matters like assault, adultery, rape and the like, and they were taken to the British court for decisions.

2. 6. 3 A search for new identity

It is important to note that apart from Brahaman people of all other castes in India historically were keen to obtain a new identity in the society. They wanted to ascend from lower status to the higher status in the society. They vied with one another for equal or superior status.

> "…The Pariah claimed they were Sudras. The Sudras Vaisyas, Vaisyas Ksatriya, Ksatriyas the Brahmans, and Brahman assumed that Ksatriyas had become extinct". (Subramanian, 1994: 33)

But Pariah or Untouchables could not come out of their pathetic status in the society. It is only through the efforts of non-Brahaman communities that Pariah and Untouchables received some social and political ascendancy. Conversion into Christianity was an obvious process of liberation from Brahman dominance for these people and an opportunity for progress in this world.

2. 7 Economic Conditions of Indian Community

India has had a long and painful experience with poverty. That poverty is one of the real rulers of India is less a figure of speech than a grim fact. India is a poor country and this fact all authorities affirm and no one denies. But when efforts are made to tell how poor India is, agreement ceases as

> "The material for estimates of average income is of such an unreliable and uncoordinated nature that the conclusion drawn can be nothing more than conjecture of more or less doubtful accuracy". (Picket, 1969: 85)

A distinctive feature in the economic life of India, which radically affects the distribution of wealth, is introduced by the caste system. The assignment of functions and occupations to caste communities to a considerable extent controls the economic potentialities of all families and individuals. There are often decided differences in the economic conditions of the several families of any caste in the village, but the range of economic variation possible for any family is pretty well determined in each village by the caste to which it belongs.

In a survey on mass conversion in India conducted by a team of the members of Christian organizations under the leadership of picket observed,

> "A Brahman may be very wealthy or entirely poverty stricken: but in wide areas on meeting a member of a Brahman caste one may be fairly sure that he is neither very rich nor very poor. His caste places upon him restrictions against acquiring wealth and insures him against being reduced to extreme poverty.

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Likewise, meeting a member of one of the untouchable castes whose historic communal occupation is casual field labourer; one assumes with little chance of error that he is extremely poor". (Picket, 1969: 87)

W. H. Wiser observed in one of the Hindu village in North India", wrote

"Each individual has fixed economic and social status, established by his birth in any given caste". (Picket, 1969: 87)

The effect of a caste occupation upon the distribution of wealth is enhanced by caste customs, traditions and characteristics. Caste customs may cut off sources of income open to members of other castes in same occupation, or may necessitate expenditures, which in other castes are discouraged. Mr. M.L. Darling vividly contrasts agriculturalists of the Rajput (Kshatriaya - upper caste) and the Jat caste (lower caste) in the Punjab. The Rajput from pure descent was forbidden to touch the plough but the Jat did plough the field. In pursuit to maintain their respect many Rajput were left poor as they did not allowed even their wives to work to support them. Jat community kept becoming richer and richer in the villages economically.

It is customary to refer to the depressed classes of India as being habitually hungry. Missionary literature about these people is heavily laden with references to millions of people going to bed hungry every night and never in their lives having enough to eat. Economists have written in terms not much more conservative.

Dr. Gilbert Slater, writing of the Adi-Dravidas of Madras, under the name of Pariahs, says,

"Of these people the kindred castes of Pallans, Parayas, Cherumas, etc… it may be said generally that they are habitually hungry… Their earnings in grain and coin barely suffice for the subsistence of families large enough

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to maintain their numbers from one generation to another, the surplus offspring dying off". (Pickett, 1969: 119)

In the Tamil country, from where most of the South African Indian Anglican Christians come, land has been the main source of income. Prior to the Industrial Revolution, all production, including all innovations and new implements made, were centred on agriculture, which to a very large extent was the mainstay of all activities, social and political. For the purpose of learning about economic conditions or inquiry into the economic condition of the Indians in Tamil Nadu, these agricultural classes may roughly be classified as Small Tenants, Landlords and Serfs.

2. 7. 1 Small Tenants

The vast majority of the small tenants as Munro said,

"Are so poor that it is always doubtful whether they will next year be in the rank of cultivators or labourers...The loss of a bullock or a member of a family or confinement by a fit of sickness, frequently disabled them from paying their usual rent the next year". (Subramanian, 1994: 191)

Francis Buchanan who was deputed to inquire into the economic conditions of the Madras Presidency in his report often talked about the extreme poverty of the millions of small tenants.

The periodic outbreak of famine particularly during the period between 1865 and 1880 saw the agricultural classes greatly distressed. He wrote of the Government of India in 1888,

"Under the orders of the Governor-General, Lord Dufferin instituted an inquiry to asses the condition of agricultural classes". (Subramanian, 1994, 202)

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However, despite all efforts and all measures more than 30% of them were below the poverty line due to frequent famine, oppressive government policy, the world wars, and caste and its concomitant effects.

2.7.2 Landlords

The landlords in Tamil country, variously known as *Kaniyatcikaran, mirasidars, mittatara, Zamindars and inamdars,* possessed extensive lands which they either cultivated directly with the aid of their own labourers or leased out to tenants who in turn cultivated them on their behalf. Many among them were so wealthy that they exceeded even the Englishmen in their extravagance and way of life.

Lord Cannemera (1886-90) asked the Inspector-General of registration of Madras to examine the economic condition of the Madras Presidency. In his report he recorded,

> "There were wealthiest landlords like Raja of Ramand, Sivaganga and Ettiyapuram. The next class of landowners was the inamdars, who numbered 438,659 and held around 8.2 millions of acres, 19 acres each on average". (Subramanian, 1994: 206)

2.7.3 Serfdom

Slavery was a very ancient institution in the Tamil country. However some scholars like V. Kanakasabhai,

> "… Repudiated the existence of such an institution in the ancient Tamil country". (Subramanian, 1994, 207)

But literature and epigraphy often refer to the existence of such an institution.

> "There are frequent references to urimaiccurram attimaittiral, e.g. the group of slaves in Cillappatikaram. In ancient Tamil society they were known as Atiurai. Kalittokai refers to such Atimai. It says they were branded on the chest". (Subramanian, 1994: 207)

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In the early and later medieval period the prevalence of such an institution is attested to by literary and inscriptional evidences. The British records are full of such references. Francis Buchanan during his official tour at the beginning of the nineteenth century had taken note of this institution. During the period 1707 – 1947 there were,

> "Two kinds of slaves or serfs – Pataiyal and the Pankal: They mostly belonged to Pariah, Palli and Pallan castes that were traditional agricultural laborers whose pitiable lot had elicited the sympathy and support of many. They were attached to the soil and usually were transferred along with it". (Subramanian, 1994: 207)

These slaves or serfs were owned either by the individual masters or village community as a whole. If they were under private owners, they were given food and shelter. In the case of a joint village, they belonged to the community as a whole.

Ellis, an authority on the Mirasi system, says,

> "They were the village system and were the backbone of the rural economy. In the famous Mirasi papers, he deals extensively with Mirasi system and says, it is common among Mirsidars to have group of slaves or serfs to till their soil. They were even sold apart from land". (Subramanian, 1994: 208)

In 1800 when Buchanan toured the country,

> "The price of a serf and his wife was between 10 to 50 Pagodas. Slaves once slaves were always slaves". (Subramanian, 1994: 209)

The slaves as per the inquiry in 1819 were found in vogue in Trichinopoly, Tanjore, South Arcot, Tinnevelly and Chingleput District.

In the Madras Presidency,

"The ryotwari system encouraged individual ownership and as a result many small land owners sprang up. Due to heavy assessments, they were not in a position to have agricultural serfs whose wages they could not pay". (Subramanian, 1994: 211)

In the later part of the 19th century many large industries that were started with the aim of rapid urbanization on the western model, were not conducive to the traditional set up.

"Public works departments, virtually by offering higher wages to the serfs, enabled them in many ways to rid themselves of their shackles, which undoubtedly was one of the benefits conferred by the British on India". (Subramanian, 1994: 211)

It is into such a complex social milieu that the church had entered. A large number of people from the lower and Pariah community came to the Christian faith through religious conversion. This was mainly due to a secular need to formulate a new respectable social identity against the old social order and a need for a new religion which could deliver them from the slavery of Hindu casteism and offer them freedom and self-dignity. The gospel of Jesus did offer the answer to the dilemma faced by the masses in India and conversion into the Christian faith led to the formation of a group of people with a new social identity.

2. 8 Conclusion

The social order in India had been shaped through Vedic culture, which was developed and formulated by Aryan invaders. Aryans as invaders in India developed the caste system in order to differentiate themselves from the original inhabitants of India. In order to control and dominate the local inhabitants they developed a complex social institution based on caste and class and developed rituals and liturgy using the Sanskrit language. Sanskrit became the language of the few elite upper caste Brahmans. The arrogance of the upper caste Brahmans, particularly the priestly class, was seen in their claims to control even gods through their ritualistic prayers.

With religious approval in Hinduism, all the local inhabitants of India were placed as the lower caste, outcaste or untouchables in the Indian social order. Hinduism governed the social order through the four Vedas. The most privileged positions in every sphere of life were confined to the Aryans. The original inhabitants were left in a perpetual subservient position and a large number of them as outcastes in the society.

The rigid caste and class system had left the masses in a perpetual dehumanised status. The identity and status of these people were sealed through Jati (Birth) birth in a particular caste and class. Their subservient existence was fixed in the society. These victims are historically depressed and marginalized in Indian history.

There were voices against orthodox Hindu social order. Buddhism and Jainism are good examples of such negation. In 19th and 20th century the British rule in India had brought a great social transformation in India. The depressed communities were longing for liberation. When the opportunity for religious conversion was offered people from lower caste and untouchable backgrounds were quick to submit to these religions.

This chapter has touched on the cultural roots of South African Indian Anglican Christians. There conversion story is rooted in Indian culture. Majority of **the** South African Indian Anglican Christians who came as indentured labourers belonged to the lower caste, outcaste or untouchables communities in India.

CHAPTER THREE

Origin of Christianity and Anglican Church in India up to 1911

Conversion and Inculturation

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has discussed how the Indian social system operates on the basis of the division of people according to their caste, class and occupation. This division is given the divine seal through Hindu religious philosophy. The social order in India is governed by complex conditions stipulated by the Hindu philosophy of society and religion. People in general live in different stratifications in Indian society. It had not been easy for any foreign religion to understand the dynamics of Indian society ruled and governed by Hindu philosophy. Christianity and Islam are two major religions, which have inter-coursed with Indian society.

This chapter will focus on the origin of Christianity in India and the conversion of the masses from Hinduism to Christianity.

Pandit Nehru (the first Prime Minister of independent India) said that the history of the Christian Church in India,

> "Is as old as Christianity itself". (Brain, 1983: 167)

But there is no documentary evidence available to arrive at any precise knowledge about the origin of Christianity in India. The evidence available is popular local tradition in its various versions.

The members of the ancient Church in South India are sometimes called Thomas Christians and due to their link for centuries with the Syrian Church of the East are sometimes called Syrian Christians.

3.2 The Origin of Christianity in India

There are two views among scholars concerning the origin of Christianity in India. Mumdadan a historian records these two views in which,

> "According to one, the foundations of Christianity in India were laid by St. Thomas, the Apostle, or even by two apostles, St. Thomas and St. Bartholomew. The other View would ascribe the arrival of Christianity in India to the enterprise of merchants and missionaries of the East-Syrian or Persian Church". (Mundadan, 1989: 21)

Christianity as per the tradition in India has existed since the first century when one of Christ's Apostles, Thomas called Didymus, traveled through Parthia to North West India. He preached the gospel and from there sailed to Malabar and arrived in Murisis in AD 52. The Apostle's mission initially focused on the Jews who were living in Malabar but he soon began to preach to the Hindu inhabitants of the district and according to tradition he enjoyed remarkable success despite the advanced and long established Hindu culture. Thomas built seven churches, which were at Cranganore, Quilon, Parur, Gokamangalam, Niranam, Chayil and Palur (or Palayur). The success of his work drew the enmity of a group of Brahmins at Mylpore and St. Thomas was martyred and buried at St. Thomas Mount. It is recorded that

> "In Malabar the advent, labours and martyrdom of the Apostle constitute a living tradition, and the rich folklore, songs and dances of Malabar Christians describe in vivid detail the work of the Apostle in South India. Detailed accounts of his work in India are included in an apocryphal work entitled *Acts of Holy Apostle Thomas"*. (Brain, 1983: 168)

The western acceptance of the tradition concerning Thomas's visit to India seems to rely on the statement of St. Jerome who wrote in the 4th century:

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"The son of God was present to all places, with Thomas in India, with Peter in Rome… The 6th century historian of the franks, Gregory of Tours, confirmed that Thomas the Apostle, according to the history of his passion, is declared to have suffered in India…Other references to St. Thomas as the Apostle in India may be found in the writings of the Church fathers: St. Ephraim, bishop of Edessa (AD 301-78), St. Ambrose, bishop of Milan (AD 340-97) and St. John Chrysostom, archbishop of Constantinople (AD 347 –407)" (Brain, 1983: 168).

Another ancient tradition connects St. Bartholomew with India but these references appear only in early Western Christian writings. Again it is,

"St. Jerome who has mentioned that a stoic philosopher named Pantaenus, sent to India by Demetrius Bishop of Alexandria, found Bartholomew preaching according to the gospel of St. Matthew, which, written in Hebrew characters, he brought with him on his return to Alexandria. The mission of Bartholomew to India is confirmed also by Eusebius, by Rufinus, a contemporary of Jerome, and by a number of other Christian writers". (Brain, 1983: 168)

There is hardly any information on the subsequent progress of Syrian Christians in South India until the 4th century,

"…when a 'large colony' of Syrians arrived to settle in Malabar under the leadership of a merchant prince called Cannae Thomas or Thomas of Canaan, and this group was further reinforced in the 7th, 8th, and 9th centuries when considerable numbers of Nestorians arrived, perhaps as part of their energetic missionary drive which spread along the trade routes as far as Peking". (Brain, 1983: 169)

Until the rise of Islam, when Muslim domination of trade and sea brought deterioration in their position, the Syrian Christians of Cochin, Cranganore and Malabar were a wealthy

and influential community. The Syrians, in spite of various difficulties, managed to retain their connection with the Eastern Church.

> "The pre-sixteenth century Christian community was made up of a majority of South Indians and a few foreigners. The bulk of the South Indians were in all likelihood Dravidians who had not yet developed the caste conscience which we see emerging later on as the result of the progressive Aryanization of South India". (Mundadan, 1989: 115)

The relation between the Church of India and the East Syrian, the Persian Church which started in the 3rd or 4th century, grew to such proportions that the former, in the course of time, became so dependant on the latter that everything ecclesiastical in India was practically East-Syrian. This dependence is viewed as having both advantage and disadvantage. The community of St. Thomas Christians,

> "Were able to maintain a strong Christian tradition on account of this dependency. But it…prevented the Church of India from developing an Indian Christian culture, especially in the spheres of theology, liturgy, church law and customs". (Mundadan, 1989: 115)

3. 3 The Portuguese and their Attitude

Vasco da Gama discovered the sea route to India. It is this discovery, which caused a permanent establishment of the Portuguese in Goa at the end of the 15th century, bringing western Christianity with them as well as energetic missionaries to spread the gospel.

> "During the early centuries Christianity absorbed some of the Indian cultural forms and expressions but after the arrival of the Portuguese and the colonial powers, the Church in India tended to project a more western image". (Pinto, 1985: 88)

It is during the period of the Portuguese that a link was founded between evangelism and imperialism; the *Padroado* that laid down the Christianizing of India as one of the aims of imperial expansion. This approach has done a great disservice to the work of the Indian Church. The Portuguese missionaries from 1516/17 appear,

> "…to have made an impact on the life of Christians of St. Thomas". (Mundadan, 1989: 283)

It is observed that the official attitude of the Portuguese towards the Christians of St. Thomas (as towards all other Christians) was one of sympathy and understanding. However they always considered their form of Christianity superior. The Portuguese in India considered the local customs and certain rites unacceptable and they were suppressed. But the Christians of St. Thomas's traditions did not support this view. They did not accept that,

> "…Only the Latin form of Christianity was the true Christianity". (Mudadan 1989, 288)

They viewed themselves in relation to Portuguese as Christians who belonged to the universal Church. They believed that each local community had its own customs and usages, including Church-discipline. They recognized that some of their customs and usages were being practiced way back to the time of apostles themselves. Therefore the idea of giving up their customs and practices, both social and ecclesiastical, which had been sacred to them for many centuries, was out of question. But they did not disregard certain good influences coming from the western Christians.

But unfortunately even in such a sober ecclesiastical approach the Christians of St. Thomas added a sort of narrow, exclusive concept of community life, a concept resulting from the Indian caste mentality.

The Portuguese were successful in affecting mass conversion of the people known to the Portuguese as 'paravas' for which the Indian term was 'paravars' and today, "bharatas" or "bharatars". These people worked at the Fishery Coast, which is also known as the Pearl Fishery Coast in India. This coast in the 16th century had,

> "Some twenty-two villages…Paravas had lived in these villages making their living by fishing and pearl diving from very early times". (Mundadan, 1989: 392-93)

These people under the Muslim leaseholders were reduced from independent fishermen to the status of slaves and day labourers. The Portuguese, after taking over this coast as per their descriptions, speak about mass baptisms of 'Paravas' in 1536-37. However these converts could receive pastoral care and Christian instruction only after the arrival of Francis Xavier, a Spanish Jesuit, who came to work amongst them.

The arrival of St. Francis Xavier in 1542 marked the beginning of the era of Christian expansion in India and the Far East. Francis Xavier worked amicably with the Syrian Christians and brought thousands of converts to Christianity and established mission stations run by the Society of Jesus in many parts of India.

> "During his years in India he led the religious and educational foundation of the Jesuit missions, which reached their peak in the 50 years that followed". (Brain, 1983: 171)

Xavier died in 1552. After his death relations between the Jesuits and the Syrian Christians deteriorated. Eventually division took place between the Syrian Christians. A section of them recognized the Nestorian Patriarch. And some of them owed allegiance to the Chaldean Patriarch who was in communion with Rome.

The Jesuits continued to remain quite active during the 17th century. After Xavier, the other prominent name that emerged in Jesuit mission was Robert de Nobeli. He arrived in

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Madras in the year 1605. He was a gifted linguist with knowledge of Tamil and Telugu languages. De Nobeli adopted a life style resembling a Hindu Brahman. This was part of his mission strategy to convert the upper caste Hindus to Christianity. He lived, dressed and ate exactly as per Brahman culture. After the death of De Nobeli,

> "Converts came more and more from the Shudra caste and the depressed classes. In 1700 There were about 80 000 Christians in the Madura mission". (Brain, 1983, 172)

In the 18th century both Syrian and Roman Catholics suffered at the hands of Tippoo Sultan. By the end of the 18th century Malabar came under British Rule. Tippoo Sultan was defeated in 1799 by the British, and Travancore and Cochin were taken over and a British resident was appointed. The Church of England began to take an interest in Syrian Christians. But the Syrian Church again divided, into the Orthodox Syrian Church with its leader in Kottayam and the Reformed or Mar Thoma Church of Malabar. There emerged five operative branches of Syrian Church which include,

> "The Romo-Syrians (of the Syriac rite or Roman rite), Malankara or unreformed Church, The Nestorians of the Trichur district, The Mar Thoma reformed Syrian Church, and an Anglican section which forms the Diocese of Central Travancore of the Church of South India". (Brain, 1983: 170)

The primary targets initially for both the Apostle Thomas and the Portuguese were individuals from among the upper caste, mainly Brahmans.

Among the Indian Christians who came to Natal there were a few Indians who identified themselves as Syrian Christians. However these converts were from lower caste and perhaps were converted after the death of Robert De Nobeli.

From 18th century onward during the Mogul Empire the majority of Hindus were becoming defensive about their religion and culture. The Mogul Empire finally collapsed

in the middle of the 19th century. By this time the British and the French, as well as Portuguese, had acquired possessions in India. The British defeated the French, and proclaimed imperial rule over the whole subcontinent. The Portuguese retained some small possessions, including Goa.

3.4 The Anglican Church

Major numerical growth of the protestant church in India took place during 18th and 19th centuries. The entry of Protestant missionaries into the Indian mission field is directly connected to the strong evangelical revival movements, which began in Europe and the United States towards the end of the 18th century. These movements produced a number of active and influential missionary societies. The first Protestant missionaries to enter the Indian field were the Lutherans who were invited by King Fredrick of Denmark. Lutherans started their mission in the Danish settlements of Tranquebar on the Coromandel Coast of South-east India. In the 18th century Anglican Society known as Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) supported Lutheran ministers. For almost a century the Anglican societies particularly the SPCK, Society for Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) and Church Mission Society (CMS) were active in India.

The growth of the Anglican organization and its influence in India after 1813 affected the old 'English missions' in the South. By the turn of the century the zeal which had started the enterprise in Denmark and Germany had grown cold. The responsible factor for this was the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. At this time the rise of missionary zeal in England and the relaxation of restrictions to enter India resulted in bringing the "English missions" more directly under Anglican control. In 1816, the first bishop of Calcutta, Thomas Middleton, was appointed.

However, in the last decade of the 18th century and the first two decades of the 19th, under a fresh impulse of missionary zeal a number of other societies were founded. By the end of the 18th century the history of India was to be the British period. Brain in his research records that the Anglican Church was a leading denomination in India: in terms of having more missionaries, educational and medical institutions and more converts in India. It is

for this reason assumed that a large proportion of the Christians who came to Natal were Anglicans. However since no immigrant gave his caste as Anglican Brain in his research says that no exact number can be ascertained.

> "…But several from the known Anglican mission areas described themselves as Protestants, presumably being converts made by the Church Mission Society, the London Missionary Society, or another missionary society". (Brain, 1983: 186)

The work of Anglican Church amongst the depressed community included, famine relief to the depressed community, establishment of educational institutions affecting both upper and lower caste people, and the establishment of medical and technical institutions. A number of converts coming from the depressed community had benefited from these services.

Throughout the middle years of the nineteenth century the educated and upper class and upper caste community was the target for conversion. During this period many enlightened young Hindu students began to question the validity of caste system and other Hindu rituals and customs. They made the call for reformation in Hinduism. These young people were influenced by western education. It is during this period that many individual upper-caste Hindus were converted into Christianity. For the missionaries these were prize catches. Therefore upper-caste converts were well recognized by the missionaries and in the western Church structure.

Upper caste converts eventually evolved in formulating Indian Christian theology. They used classical Hindu teachings through Vedantic philosophy as tools for formulating Indian Christian theology.

During this period there were many anonymous believers of Jesus Christ in India. The term anonymous is coined in recent times by Indian Christian theologians who believe that there are many Hindu people who have not accepted Christianity by baptism or confirmation as per Church rituals. But there were many who believe in Jesus Christ, read

the Bible and Christian prayers without presenting themselves for baptisms. Firth a historian in his study of Indian Church history during British India has mentioned that educated Hindus who were dissatisfied with Hinduism took Christianity seriously. They found Hinduism stagnant and felt the need of reformation of Hinduism. For many religious minded Indian people,

"…Christianity of the West was the most challenging alternative". (Firth, 1961: 191)

Conversions of some individuals continued to take place until the close of the 19th century. There are some important names, for example the conversion of Pandita Rama Bai in 1883, Narayan Vaman Tilak who is known as Christian poet of Maharashtra in 1895. However, Hinduism had immense power to absorb Christian teaching and began to reform itself. It was also the time when the spirit of nationalism began to capture the mind of Indian people. Firth describes in his writings on Indian Church history that,

"… As the nineteenth century passed over into the twentieth, reinterpretations of Hinduism and above all, political nationalism gathered strength and turned men's minds away from Christianity". (Firth, 1961: 191)

The individual conversions from upper caste were becoming fewer. However the Anglican Church has received converts from upper caste Hindus amongst them were to be found some outstanding individuals who contributed to the emergence of Indian Christian theology.

There had been a growing move amongst the Churches belonging to different denominations in India towards unification. In 1947 in South India the Churches were united. Three major protestant churches came together; the Anglican Communion, the Indian districts of Methodist Churches, and the United Churches. These three major churches formed 'The Church of South India' in 1947. The strong places of work of the Anglican Church in South India are located in Madras, Thirunevilli, Tranvancore, Cochin

and Dornakol. This union is considered to be one of the transforming events in the life and witness of the Church in the first half of the 20th century.

3.5 The Conversion of Individuals and Masses

As mentioned previously, before the mass movements began missionaries were mainly concerned to convert upper caste Hindus. Missionaries hoped that since the upper caste had great control over lower caste people through their conversion they would be able to win the lower caste easily. Missionaries

> "…Sought individual converts and tried to destroy their connection with castes. They saw castes only as obstructions to the spread of the gospel, never as channels along which it will spread". (Pickett, 1969: 55)

Conversion of individuals or masses had one common factor: that both individuals and masses had lost their place in the social setting of Indian society. Their conversion had cost them isolation from their own people and made them strangers in their own nation and society.

However, James Massey a leading Dalit speaks about disparity in relation to the attitude of missionaries towards converts. He says,

> "Missionaries gave status to upper class converts whom they felt had given up much, while they saw the Dalits as 'mass movement Christians', and not even as converts". (Wingate, 1999: 21)

The conversion of Brahmans and other high caste people throughout the nineteenth century was considered to be of great value and importance by the Church in India. It is said that these individual converts from the upper caste were cultured, intelligent and intellectual leaders equal with the most of enlightened non-Christians in the nineteenth century. The upper caste converts gave the Church in India 'the Indian Christian theology'. They were well supported by western missionaries and this group ruled the

Indian Church as they had occupied most of the privileged positions in the hierarchy of the Church.

However, the chief numerical growth was not through the conversions of the upper classes in India, but by mass movements or group conversions among much more lowly sections of the people. Mass movements from depressed communities to Christianity were taking place throughout India. South India has witnessed the large turnout of people from Hinduism to Christianity.

> "A major feature in the history of South Indian mass movements is the grievous famine of 1876-1878, after which thousands of the depressed classes became Christians because of help received". (Firth, 1960: 200)

This group however had less say in the polity of the Church. They followed the rule set by the upper caste converts in conjunction with western Church leadership.

Converts from depressed communities and lower castes had a double dose of isolation. They were extricated from their old relatives and they were not fully adopted by the western society as equal partners in the Church. There had been discrimination within the Indian Church where people from untouchable backgrounds had separate seating arrangements and the communion to them was served only after the upper caste converts had received.

They were less educated but eventually many individuals from this group of Christians became intellectually competent. Today there are strong voices from the intellectuals of this section against the discrimination they had undergone in the Christian religion after their conversion from Hinduism to Christianity. Some of the intellectuals from this section of Christians prefer to call themselves Dalit Christians. Today the educated Dalit Christian theologians are critically evaluating the relevance of Indian Christian theology formulated by upper-caste converts with the help of western missionaries. They are

looking for a biblical Christianity, which could help them to formulate a Christian theology as more conducive to their conversion experience.

Vincent Kumaradoss (O' Connor 2000, 279-280) in his writing about the Society for Propagating the Gospel and the impact of conversion in 19th and 20th century in Tirunelveli (in British time known as Tinnevelly) traces the complex story of conversions of the upper caste 'Vellala' and lower castes 'Shanar' into Christianity in the Tirunelveli region. Occupationally, the 'Shanar' community was 'toddy tapping': This occupation was considered to be polluting in the Indian caste hierarchy. The Shanar community maintained their caste element and their occupation in the Christian faith. The Church had to accept them on their terms.

In this region the inhabitants who embraced Christianity were larger than any other province in India. The other mission body that worked in this region was the Church Mission Society. It is in this region in 1799 in a town called 'Mudalur' that the first of a series of Christian colonies that served as "towns of refuge' for converts was established.

> "The creation of Christian villages as the exclusive domain of the converts enabled them to safeguard themselves against upper-caste assaults, and also freed them from the traditionally wielded power of the indigenous elite. Social boundaries were redrawn". (O' Connor, 2000: 280)

For lower caste converts these exclusive villages were the sign of recasting their caste.

The upper-caste converts as per missionaries had come into Christianity chiefly on spiritual grounds and they had lost every privilege in their upper caste community and Indian society at large. In view of this prejudice Kumaradoss notes,

> "[How] missionary spiritual labour had to come to terms with the temporal issues in particular the structure of power mediated by caste, grounded in the local cultural milieu". (O' Connor, 2000: 274)

Kumaradoss also notes that upper caste converts were provided a secure and privileged space within the Church.

> "They had been the missionaries' earliest targets, were celebrated as prized catches and were counted on the furtherance of the gospel". (O' Connor, 2000, 274-275)

The impact of such privileges was seen as most of them had occupied leadership positions as catechists, preachers and pastors in the newly founded churches. By 1840 most catechists in the Churches of Tirunelveli were upper-caste Vellars trained at Tanjore.

> "And these Vellalar converts treated the lower caste Shanar and Paraiyar converts as inferior because both the latter groups were considered outcastes in the traditional caste hierarchy". (O' Connor, 2000: 275)

Upper caste converts continued to derive benefits from the Church and their children after receiving a western education occupied high positions in the Church as well as in the secular domain.

> "The recognition accorded them and their early domination in the Church led to the perpetuation of upper-caste privileges within the Church". (O' Connor, 2000: 275)

It is mostly the upper-caste converts with western missionaries who initiated the inculturation process of the Christian faith in India. Lately, Dalits (Christians from the lower caste or untouchable backgrounds) are beginning to refute such inculturation and consider it as perpetuation of the Brahmanic culture in the Indian Church. A desire from learned western theologians to learn Sanskrit and the upper caste educated converts constructed Indian Christian theology with a desire to keep their old culture intact and keep alive in them the patriotic feelings for their nation; this has lopsided the meaning of

true biblical Christianity for those who seek Christ as liberator of the depressed community. Today Arvind P. Nirmal a prominent Dalit theologians points out that,

> "Most of the contributions to Indian Christian theology in the past came from high caste converts to Christianity. The result has been that Indian Christian theology has perpetuated within itself what I preferred to call 'Brahmanic tradition'". (Clark, 1999: 36)

3. 6 Indian Christian Theology – Formulated by Western Missionaries and the Upper Caste Converts

In order to understand the voices of the converts from the lower castes against Indian Christian theology, it will be important to outline the Indian Christian theology formulated and perpetuated by the upper caste converts and the western missionaries. Indian Christian theology for them was an initiation of the inculturation process of the Christian faith in India.

As no records are available it is not possible to detect the theology of the Indian Church during the early Church in the Nestorian times. The Syrian Christians are acknowledged to be culturally a closely integrated community with Indian society. But they hardly made any attempt to work out a theology with Indian terminology.

> "Thus the theology of the Syrian church, found as it is mainly in the liturgy and in formularies for ordination and consecration, has remained entirely Syrian, based on the Syrian language, and despite its age-long sojourn on Indian soil, theologically as far removed from Indian thought as is Roman or Protestant theology". (Boyd, 1989: 9)

One may however note the influence on Indian theology of the characteristic Syrian Christology. The Syrian Orthodox church, often called 'Jacobite' who was usually equated with 'monophysite'. Monophysite is associated with the heresy of Eutyches on the account of their view that the human nature of Christ was absorbed into the divine.

This, view was condemned by the Council of Chalcedon in 451. Chalcedon affirmed that Christ's two distinct natures, divine and human, are found in one 'person'.

A modern Syrian writer, E.M. Philip, believes that the early fathers were not so very different in what they believed from the Chalcedonian party, though they condemned the words 'acknowledged in two natures'. Syrians maintained that in Christ there was only 'one' nature, not in Eutychian sense but close to the western idea of a single person in whom two natures, though distinct, are united. According to Philip, The 'one nature' which they affirmed,

> "…formed by the hypostatic union of divinity and humanity substantially and inseparably preserving the properties of the natures without mixture or without confusion. (Boyd, 1989: 9-10)

This affirmation is different to the teaching of Eutyches. Eutyches concept about the character of the union of divine and human in our Lord were so united that one of them absorbed the other. The Council of Chalcedon condemned this.

A Syrian theologian of the mid-nineteenth century, E. Philipos writes about Syrian belief on the two natures of Christ. He says,

> "The Syrians believe that the nature in Christ is one; that the two natures were united with one another; because in Christ the two natures were mingled together- the nature of Godhead and the nature of manhood - like wine with water. And whereas it is said that there is one nature in Christ, it is for the confirmation of the unity of the two nature one with another". (Boyd, 1989: 10)

It is generally agreed that *Roberto De Nobili* was the first pioneer of Christian writing in Indian languages and true Indian style. However the first pioneer in Christian writing in Indian language is one of De Nobili's confrere, an English Jesuit, Thomas Stephens,

"Who learnt the local language and composed a Christian 'Purana' in the then current style, a long poem, narrating stories from the old and New Testaments in colloquial Marathi with an admixture of Konkani" (Pinto, 1985: 89).

De Nobili learnt the Sanskrit and Tamil languages and decided to act the role of a Christian S*anyasi.* For this he adopted the appropriate garb and Indian style of living. He studied the Vedas and the Vedanta philosophy and used Vedantic philosophical language as a vehicle for conveying Christian theological truth. He had written a number of treatises, which included the 'life of our Lady' in Sanskrit, canticles for marriages and funerals and a summary of Christian doctrine in a hundred Sanskrit *slokas* (chants). In Tamil he wrote a large catechism known as *Gnanopadesam* (Teaching of Knowledge) a summary of Christian doctrine in five volumes. Other works includes 'Gnana Sancheevi (Spiritual Medicine), Punar-janma-akshepam (Refutation of Rebirth), Gnanopadesam Twenty-six Pirasangangal, (Thomist arguments for the existence of God). Though De Nobili's methods of work were indigenous and highly original, his writings really represent an experiment in indigenous theology using Hindu terminology for the exposition of Christian doctrine. His attitude to religious Hinduism is entirely negative as he writes to refute. For example, the way he writes about repeating the name of God in order to obtain forgiveness in Hinduism,

"This prescription for the removal of sin is from the Devil. He teaches them that repeating the name 'Siva' thrice will remove all the sins of the past and the present….[and that] repeating the names 'Rama' and 'Krishna', worshiping in their temples, taking baths in Kaveri, wearing sacred ash on the forehead, and Rudraksha around the neck will remove …sin". (Boyd, 1989: 13)

A hundred years after De Nobili, Joseph Constantius Beschi wrote a famous Tamil epic on the life of Joseph Thambavani,

"In which many Hindu theological conceptions are used as vehicles of Christian teaching". (Boyd, 1989: 14)

However until 19th century no one took seriously the idea of these missionaries using Hindi and Tamil languages and using Vedas and Vedanta as a direct means for conveying and expounding Christian doctrine. Only the Christian Bhakti poets of the 19th century started working on a similar line.

William Carey (1761 - 1834) is another famous name in Indian Christian history. He was a Shoemaker by profession and came from a weaver's family in UK. William Cary lived in East of India called Bengal. Superstitious Hindus surrounded this state. They followed Goddess 'Kali' a goddess of destruction, represented by a hideous, four-armed figure with protruding tongue and many other Hindu gods.

William Carey's encounter with Hinduism in India had made him aware that caste system of Hinduism was the strongest chain. He writes about caste describing it,

> "…One of the strongest chains with which the devil ever bound the children of men. This is my comfort, that God can break it". (Drewery, 1978: 79)

As a missionary family they experienced the brunt of casteism in India when their five years old son Peter died. They could, "find no-one willing to make a coffin or to dig the child's grave lest they should lose caste.

> "…Eventually, four Mussulmen (Moslem) were prevailed upon to dig the grave but for even this simple act of service they were ostracized by their village". (Drewery, 1978: 81)

William Carey in India had attempted great things for God. His biggest sacrifice was realized when his family had to leave 'Kidderpore' in North Bengal where he had all his investment. He had worked in Kidderpore as self-supported missionary. This move was not a choice but due to circumstances. His missionary friends were not granted permission to enter the British India. These friends found refuge in Serampore, which was a Danish territory. Serampore at that time was also known to be a city of refuge for

all who were in debt and to this account a degree of disgrace was attached to the inhabitant of Serampore.

He moved with his family to Serampore in 1800 and it is here that he devoted his time and energy in missionary task. In spite of many a sufferings he is known to have achieved great things for God. He took up the task of translating the Bible in the local languages and succeeded in publishing the Bible in more than thirty languages. He communicated boldly the word of God. The establishment of the first University in India call Serampore University is attributed to his labour.

Henry Martin (1781-1812) is another important name in Indian Christian History. He is known as Scholar and Missionary to India and Persia. After completing his education from Cambridge University in England, he taught in St. John's College and was ordained in London and completed his curacy. Eventually in order to support his sister who was dependent on him, he accepted to work as chaplain with East India Company and he set his voyage to India. Henry Martin is known in India for his scholarly work in translating Bible in Arabic and his knowledge of Hindustani language. His last work was the translation of New Testament in Persia. He was intolerant of some aspects of Indian cultures such as "Suttee" (Hindu women from wealthy family willingly leap into the flames of funeral pyre of their husbands) and also the 'worship of the devils" in Calcutta and Aldeen in India.

His scholarly discourses through sermons and writing had earned him great respect amongst Hindu and Muslim scholars in India. His major areas of work in India had been in Patna, Dinapore, Calcutta, Kanpore. He is known for drawing a large number of converts from Muslim backgrounds in India. Before leaving for Persia in 1842 one of his major contribution to the Anglican Church in India was to a convert young Doctor Sheikh Salih (after conversion known as Abdul Masih) who became a well known Anglican clergy in East India. In his memory, a well known Institute 'Henry Martin Institute of Islamic Studies" was established. This institution has made great contribution to Indian

Mission. However this Institute is now known as an ecumenical Institute that undertakes a number of community related research projects.

Henry Martin died at a young age. But he is remembered both in India and United Kingdom for his authentic contribution to the life of the Church both in India and in England.

However the emergence of Indian Christian theology is attributed to the converts from upper castes in India. The following names of converts and their contribution in formulating Indian Christian theology have an important place in the Indian Church history. Most of these converts wrote in refutation to Hindu religious philosophy.

Nehemiah Goreh (1825-1895) whose original name was Nilakantha Sastri Goreh born in a Maharashtrian Chitpavan Brahman family. He was brought up in Banaras and was a Sanskrit scholar and an exponent of Hinduism. He was converted to the Christian faith in 1848 and was ordained in the Anglican Church. His main work 'Shadarshna Darpana" or Hindu philosophical systems, an English translation of the same 'a rational refutation of Hindu philosophical systems' was published in 1862. Goreh eventually,

> "had come to accept western 'catholic' orthodoxy in full - the Athanasian Creed was his special delight". (Boyd, 1989: 46)

He expressed his Christian faith with using language his Hindu friends understood and argued in favour of Christian faith. He said,

> "I gave up the Hindu religion because I came to see that it was not a religion given by God. The errors of it I condemn. But I never found fault in idea with its teaching that God Incarnate. Indeed, many stories of Krishna and Rama, whom the Hindu religion teaches to be incarnations of God, used to be very affecting to us… And thus our countrymen have

been prepared, to some extent, to appreciate and accept the truths of Christianity". (Boyd, 1989: 56)

Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya (1861-1907) who before conversion was known as Bhavani Charan Banerji, born and brought up in a Bengali Brahman family was baptized in 1891 into the Anglican Church but in the same year he became a Catholic and took,

"The name Theophilus, in Sanskrit Brahmabandhab means a friend of Brahman". (Pinto, 1985, 91)

In 1894 he adopted an Indian Sanyasi style wearing a saffron robe. He is considered to be the first Indian Christian theologian. He worked with the poet Rabindernath Tagore in developing a renowned ashram at Santiniketan. He was a friend of Rama Krishna Paramhans and Keshab Chander Sen. For him Christianity was the fulfillment of Hinduism. His interpretation of the Trinity was based on the Vedantic interpretation Sat (god being pure existence), Chit (pure knowledge) and Anand (pure bliss).

He called himself a Christian Hindu: For him his religion was Christian, in all else he was Hindu. He writes in a Bengali daily paper call 'Sandhya',

"Our dharma has two branches: samaj dharma and sadhan dharma…We are Hindus. Our Hinduism is preserved by the strength of samaj dharma. While the sadhan dharma is of the individual, its object is sadhan and muktee (salvation). It is a hidden thing and one to be meditated upon. It has no connection whatever with society. It is a matter known to the guru and Shishya only. A Hindu, so far as sadhan goes, can belong to any religion". (Boyd, 1989: 68-69)

He further writes about the dual meaning about the birth in Hinduism and rebirth by accepting Christian faith.

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"By birth we are Hindus and shall remain Hindus till death. But as dwija (twice born) by virtue of our sacramental rebirth, we are catholic, we are members of an indefectible communion embracing all ages and climes…our thought and thinking is emphatically Hindu. We are more speculative than practical, more given to synthesis than analysis, more contemplative than active. It is extremely difficult for us to learn how to think like the Greeks of old or the scholastics of the middle Ages. Our brains are molded in the philosophic cast of our ancient country". (Boyd, 1989, 83-84)

In the words of an anonymous commentator:

"Brahmabandhab attempted the synthesis of philosophy and theology, eastern and western, not by evaporating concepts but by crystallizing the message of the Catholic Church in the Vedanta solution of Sankracharya". (Boyd, 1989: 84-85)

He faced stiff opposition from ecclesiastical circles and died at an early age of 46 from tetanus.

Krishna Mohan Banerjee (1813-1885) was baptized in the Anglican Church and was ordained priest in 1852. He promoted the indigenization of Christian theology. He studied Vedas and wrote in a journal Asian Witness in 1875 in which by showing parallels between the Old Testament and Hinduism he declared that

"Christianity is the logical conclusion of Hinduism". (Pinto, 1985: 92)

A.S. Appasamy Pillai (b. 1848) was born into an orthodox Hindu family in Tinnevelly and was baptized as a young student of Madras University. After studying the Vedas (Rig Veda), he came to the conclusion that Hinduism (in Rig Veda) is an anticipation of Christianity. He was perhaps the first Anglican Christian to make use of the Yoga technique in his meditation and prayer life.

Sadhu Sunder Singh (1889-1929) was born into a rich Sikh family in Patiala. Sunder Singh was deeply influenced by his pious mother. His mother trained him in Bhakti tradition of Hinduism and the Sikh religion. He began to search for truth through reading the scriptures of different faiths and through practicing the yoga.

He was baptized at the age of 15 into the Anglican Church but did not stay or belong to any denominational church. His attitude towards corporate worship was rather negative. He writes,

> "It is quite natural that no form of Church service can ever satisfy deeply spiritual people, because such persons already have direct fellowship with God in meditation, and they are always conscious of his blessed presence in their souls". (Boyd, 1989: 106)

He became a Sadhu at the age of 16 and was known as guru, a mystic with a deep communion with Christ. He wrote,

> "Christianity is the fulfillment of Hinduism. Hinduism has been digging channels. Christ is the water to flow through these channels". (Boyd, 1989: 107)

He followed the Bhakti tradition and influenced many by his simplicity and a spirit of Bhakti. He was truly Indian in all his ways. He was Christo centric. However he believed,

> "Indians greatly need the water of life, but they do not want it in European vessels". (Boyd, 1989: 109)

A.J. Appasamy fostered Sunder Singh's Bhakti current more systematically.

Aiyadurai Jesudasan Appasamy (b. 1891) – was converted to Christianity from Saivism at the age of 24 and became bishop of the Church. Aiyadurai is known to have identified more than any other with bhakti tradition in India. The Bhakti movement in India is

related to the great Vaishnava reformed movement in the Tamil country, which was instituted chiefly through inspired singers and poets known as the Alvars. They composed devout Bhakti songs. Ramanuja in the later half of the eleventh century developed this movement by providing solid theological meaning to Bhakti songs of Alvars.

After Ramanuja, Ramananda the fifth in succession to Ramanuja gave theistic thought to the Bhakti movement. Bhakti movement had radiated in all directions. And number of leaders of bhakti tradition emerged in many parts of the country. The most popular among these leaders were,

> "Tulsidas for the Hindi speakers, Namdev and Tukaram in Maharashtra, Chaitnya in Bengal, Mirabai on the borders of Gujrat and Rajasthan". (Boyd, 1989: 111)

When the Christian church was taking root in India there had existed a theistic tradition of Bhakti and there were those who felt that Bhakti has led them towards the light of Christ.

Before Aiyadurai, in the early 19th century, there began a Christian Bhakti movement by convert Christian poets. One of the best known amongst them was a Tamil Christian poet *H. A. Krishna Pillai (1827-1900)* born in high caste Vaisnavite, non-Brahman family. He was more of a missionary than a theologian. The other important name attached to Bhakti tradition is Narayan Vaman Tilak (1862-1919) the poet of Maharashtra from the community of Chitpavan Brahmans.

However Bishop A.J. Appasamy introduced into the Indian Christian life the Hindu B*hakti* tradition. He considered Christianity as Bhakti Marga. Rudolf Otto defined this Bhakti tradition as,

> "Faith in salvation through an eternal God and through a saving fellowship with Him". (Boyd, 1989: 110)

Bishop A.J. Appasamy was quite influenced by Ramanuja. Ramanuja rejected the impersonal God (Nirguna Brahman) of Sankara in Kanchipuram. Ramanuja longed for salvation through personal fellowship with a personal God. Ramanuja centered his thoughts on a God call 'Isvara'. For him God,

> "…Has attributes. God is related to the world as the soul is to the body, and since this not relation of identity, a personal relationship is possible between God and man. The name given to Ramanuja's system is Visistadvaita or modified non-dualism". (Boyd, 1989: 111)

However Bishop A.J. Appasamy emphasized God in Christ as a loving God. He,

> "Did not hold the Hindu idea of 'absorption into the divine' but a loving personal union with God in Christ who said 'abide in me and I in you". (Pinto, 1985: 94)

Pandipeddi Chenchiah (1866-1959) – converted to Christianity with his father as a young boy. He was a distinguished lawyer and late chief judge of a small Pudukkottai State in India. His writings were directed towards preserving the Indian and Hindu cultural heritage. He had felt Indian cultural heritage was threatened by organized Christianity. He was against the institutionalized Church and found Christian doctrine and confession an intolerable burden on the free life of the Spirit. He called the doctrinal statements of the Church and confessions as 'raw fact of Christ'. His theology is called 'The theology of new creation'.

> "Christ represented for him a new stage in the evolution of man. He is the True Man and New Man. If by the power of the Spirit we can become one with him, then we too can become as he is and so become 'new creatures'. That is how the 'new creation begins'. And so we find the Kingdom of God coming on earth, a Kingdom whose members are 'Christ's new creatures', and who live according to 'the yoga of the spirit". (Boyd, 1989: 145)

Vengal Chakkarai Chetty (1880-1958) – born in a well-to-do Madras family of the Chetty caste, the highest non-Brahaman caste in Tamilnadu. He qualified as a lawyer but helped the evangelistic work among educated Hindus with the Danish Missionary Society. He had no particular philosophical affiliation like other Indian Christian theologians. His theology is known as 'A Christology of the Spirit". He makes most extensive use of Hindu terminology in explaining Christology with the problem of the relation of Jesus' history to the Christ of faith, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, whom he virtually identifies with Christ and Christian Bhakti deeply influenced by the death and suffering of Jesus Christ. Chakkarai emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit,

> "As a continuing part of the incarnation or *avatara,* and in effect identifies the Spirit with the risen, living Christ at work in the world today". (Boyd, 1989: 172)

For Chakarai the Holy Spirit has significant place in understanding Christ in the Indian setting. It is not historical Jesus but the Holy Spirit as starting point, which makes sense to Indian consciousness. He quotes from the gospel where Jesus had promised the Comforter and had said, 'I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you… and at Pentecost this promise was fulfilled'. Therefore for him the starting point in our knowledge of Christ, and so of our knowledge of God whom he reveals, is the experience of the power of the Spirit. For Chakrai,

> "In other words, while the historical is the primary element in the western interpretation, the spiritual, is, or will be, the primary element in the Indian conception". (Boyd, 1989: 172-173)

Some more important names attached to Indian Christian theology are Paul David Devanandan (1901-1962), who followed the dialogical approach towards Indian heritage and religions. Jules Monchanin (1895-1957) from France made an attempt to develop the theology of Upadhyaya and the Holy Trinity as *Saccidananda*. Bede Griffiths (b. 1906) from England continued the work of Monachanin at Santivanam Ashram. Abhishiktananda (1910-1973) whose original name was Henri Le Saux from France held

that *advaitic* experience is compatible with the Christians. M.M. Thomas (b. 1916) from Kerala, India advocates a theology related to modern secular India. Raymond Panikkar (1918), born in Spain, son of a Hindu father and Spanish Catholic mother was convinced of the presence of Christ in Hinduism.

3.7 Conclusion

The conversion story of South African Indian Christians rooted in Indian history reveals that the Church initially concentrated on the upper caste Hindu society. After conversion the upper caste converts took over the reign of the Church. However the numerical growth of the Church was due to mass conversion of the depressed and oppressed community. They were placed as the lower caste and the outcaste or the untouchable communities in Hindu caste system.

A disparity is exposed in Churches attitude towards converts. The uppercaste converts were given an extra attention. It is unfortunate that the inculturation of Christianity in India had been made from the perspective of the upper caste converts. It is noted that by and large the Church evolved around the Sanskrit traditions in formulating Indian Christian theology. The church could produce scholars in Indology, the sacred scriptures of other faiths and the Sanskrit literature etc. But Church has,

> "Failed to understand how, for example, Hinduism has actually lived today by the masses or by the elite. It goes to the credit of the liberation theology for having turned the attention of the Church to the lower strata of the society". (Pinto, 1985: 17-18)

Converts from the upper-caste wanted to carry some pride of their past culture in their new faith. However the converts from lower castes were victims in the past culture, which the upper castes were bringing into Christianity. It was further complicated as the Church gave special treatment to the upper-caste. This special treatment eventually created an unfortunate division between converts from upper and lower castes in the

Church. The converts from the lower caste and untouchable background were second fiddle for a long time in the history of Christian faith in India.

However today there are voices from among the converts from the lower caste and untouchable background against Indian Christian theology. They are refuting and challenging the historical approach of the Church towards converts from lower and untouchable backgrounds. There is a call from them that the Church should evolve in studying and understanding the little traditions of the simple people of India who have entered into the life of the Church. They want to address the cultural issues from the perspective of the victims of the Hindu caste system for whom Christianity became an escape route.

Emerging Indian Christian Dalit theology is a good example of transformation among the Indian converts. This should motivate South African Indian Anglican Christians to trace back their history and evolve in formulating a Christian theology, which can speak about the impact of Jesus Christ on their lives and help them to discover their role as the 'wounded healers' in new South Africa.

CHAPTER FOUR

Migration of Indians and their settlement in South Africa

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will focus on the migration of Indians to South Africa and their socio-economic and religio-political status in South Africa. It will also focus on the work of the Anglican Church amongst the Indian people in South Africa. It is observed that indentured Indians in view of oppressive socio-economic and political circumstances in South Africa were compelled to divert their total energy to the struggle for survival. This has adversely affected their capacity to maintain and sustain their culture and custom. However, the passenger Indians who came as small entrepreneurs and did not have to undergo a struggle for survival to the extent that indentured Indians did, were able to hold on to their culture, custom and Hindu religious value systems.

Indians made their first appearance as slaves way back in 1653 in South Africa. E.S. Reddy, who for many years was the head of the Anti-Apartheid Commission in the United Nations, records,

> "Soon after Jan van Riebeeck set up a Dutch settlement at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652, to supply to Dutch ships plying to and fro India and the East Indies, people from India were taken to the Cape and sold into slavery to do domestic work for the settlers as well as the dirty and hard work on the farms". (Naidoo, 2001, 6)

But a large number of Indians entered in South Africa from 1860 onward as indentured labourers.

The history of the Indians in South Africa is a story of the perpetual social, political and economical discrimination of indentured people. It is marked by complex and multiple issues and challenges faced by them. Their orientation into South Africa records a history of pain and humiliation, rejection, poverty, and insecurity.

The fear of repatriation and expatriation until the Second World War kept Indians insecure and awfully vulnerable in South Africa. By this time 65% of Indians were born in South Africa.

Indians had no respite from social degradation. In India they were degraded in the caste hierarchy of Hinduism, and in South Africa they were socially considered "Coolie", a term used to degrade their human dignity. The apartheid policy of the Government of South Africa gave a further blow to the Indians. The policy of segregation of races limited the scope of their integration and development in the society.

There was another category of Indians who came to South Africa as "passengers" in search of establishing businesses in South Africa. These passenger Indians were not very rich but were far better off than indentured Indians. However, by implementing various policies, the Government restricted these passenger Indians from prospering in South Africa.

But it should be noted that eventually the Indians in South Africa had prospered and were put into the category of those who have. Many Africans employees and labourers had to live at their mercy. It is with this background that this study has encouraged the South African Indian Christians to connect with their roots and Dalit theology to become partners with Black theologians in South Africa to work towards building a just nation a new South Africa.

4.2 The process of immigration of Indians to South Africa

The immigration of people from a colonized background during the colonial period was related to the colonials' needs for cheap labour to work in different profitable enterprises initiated by them. However, there had been voices raised against the idea of slaves. The colonials did emancipate people from slavery but continued to keep them subject to the empire.

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"The emigration of agricultural labourers, artisans and traders from the sub-continent to various parts of the British Empire began soon after the emancipation of slaves in 1833 and continued until 1917". (Brain, 1983: 3)

Natal was annexed in 1842 by the British. Afrikaners who occupied this place had now moved to the highveld. Natal under the British Empire was in need of agricultural labourers.

4.2.1 Indentured Indian Immigrants in South Africa

George Grey, Governor of the Cape, visited Natal at a time when the colony was suffering from a severe economic depression. He promised to use his good offices with the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners. And after long negotiations in 1859, Natal government was empowered to introduce 'Coolies' from India.

One of the main reasons for Indian labourers to enter into South Africa was due to the problem of obtaining reliable labour in Natal. Natal was the smallest of the four provinces of the Union of South Africa. The labour problem in Natal was due to unwillingness of local Zulu people to work regularly in the farms. This had to do with value systems of Zulu and their lifestyle.

Hilda Kuper in her study attributes the unwillingness of Zulu people considers that Zulu people

"…Were not yet prepared to sell their labour for long stretches of time to white men whose economy and whose values were alien to their own". (Kuper, 1960: 2)

The report of the Wragg Commission (1885 – 1887) on the issue of Zulu labour records that

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"After three or four months' steady work they are seized with an irrepressible 'nostalgia', or longing to return to their kraals, therein to spend two or three months in lazy contentment and indifference to gain". (Davie, 1977: 1)

From the business perspective Zulu labour was becoming unreliable. It effected adversely the needed tropical production. Therefore on 10th October 1851, at a public meeting in Durban it was resolved that,

"It is absolutely necessary to introduce foreign free coloured labour". (Davie, 1977: 2)

Attempts, however, to bring agriculture labourers from England, the Northern States of America and China did not work well. There was a certain amount of opposition to the idea of introducing labourers from India.

The Rev. W. Holden, a Wesleyan Missionary to Natives was one of the opposition voices against the proposal for Indian labour. He was of the opinion that,

"In a short time many of them will be abandoned drunkards and die quickly in large numbers from the diseases thereby entailed, adding the vices of other countries to those which are already so prolific among the black races". (Davie, 1977: 4)

Dr Charles Johnston a member of the Town Council of Durban in 1855 was another voice against the Indians' entry into South Africa as indentured labour. In his election address in 1857, not knowing that the Indian labourers were mainly Hindus, he declared that

"I would rather cut the Gordian Knot with the sword, and place our kaffirs under military law than assist in the slightest degree to bring them in contaminating connection with the refuse of the Mohammedan world which the coolies really are". (Davie, 1977: 4-5)

There were many more voices that were in support of native labourers and against the importing of Indians into Natal.

However in the meetings of Legislative Council in 1859 the voice of Mr. Coquie was heard saying,

> "Some estates in the country which formerly employed from 30 to 100 Africans could now hardly get six…. their last resource was the introduction of Indians".
> (Davie, 1977: 9)

After the Indian mutiny in 1858, the East India Company based on the subcontinent was taken over by Her Majesty. Eventually, after lengthy negotiations with Natal, the British Government in 1859 assented to the request to allow Indian indentured labourers (the indentured system served as an alternative to slavery, and provided the workers with certain limited safeguards) to be immigrated to Natal.

The immigration to Natal began in 1860. Brain in his research on Indian immigration records that the groups of 'indentured labour' and 'passenger Indians' who came to South Africa were predominantly Hindus. There were also Muslims, Christians, a few Pharsees and handful of Buddhists who came to South Africa in both groups. They were allowed to practice their religion. Brain records,

> "A total of 152,184 indentured immigrants arrived from India between 1860 and 1911 as well as a considerable number of 'passenger' Indians who had come at their expense under the ordinary immigration laws of the colony".
> (Brain, 1983: 4)

The effects of the work of indentured labourer from India were very soon evident. Sir Liege Hulett, speaking in the Natal Parliament on 14 July 1908, described the effects of Indian labour as having saved the colony from ruin. It is acknowledged that the arrival of Indians caused

"…The material prosperity of Natal. And if it had not been for that commencement Natal could not be today in the position it holds as the premier producing country in South Africa". (Davie, 1977: 13)

The demand for Indian labourers in Natal began to increase. But there was also growing concern about the protection of these labourers who were now subjects of Her Majesty. St. Aidans hospital at the centenary celebration of their work amongst Indians in Natal sadly observes that, in spite of their hard work,

"... The pages of history are remarkably void when we search for references of spiritual, intellectual, educational, and moral upliftment of the indentured labourer in the period before 1900". (St. Aidan's Mission, 1983: 7)

4.2.2 "Passenger Indian" Immigrants

The second category of immigrants from India was "passenger' Indians who had come at their own expense under the ordinary immigration laws of the colony in South Africa. The majority came specifically to trade or serve commerce, and they opened up shops in backward rural towns, coalmine towns, African tribal areas, and a few developed European centers in Natal. They supplied goods desired not only by the Indian masses but also by Africans and Europeans. Passenger Indians were also called "Arabs". Pachai in his study on passenger Indians notes that most of them belonged to the Muslim trading community mostly from Bombay Presidency in India.

"Though some had been in Mauritius for a few years…they constituted a small minority of the Indian population". (Pachai, 1971: 7)

4.2.3 The 'Free' Indian

The third category of Indians was called 'free' Indians. The first batch of indentured Indians arrived in 1860 on contracts of service for a period of three (later five) years, after which they became automatically 'free'. As 'free' Indians, they could remain in Natal or receive a free return to India; or they might indenture for a further period of five years

service, after which they had the option of a free passage back to India or a piece of Crown land in lieu of the fare.

Distinctions continued to be drawn between 'free' and 'passenger' Indians. Free Indians like their indentured forbears were registered under a separate law in the office of the Protector of Indian Immigrants. Passenger Indians were registered with the same Civil Authority as the European population. However Indian immigrants were subject to separate registration of marriages, births and deaths. Hilda Kuper in her research points out that

> "…Of the total Indian population of Natal the passengers constitutes not more than ten per cent". (Kuper, 1960: 4)

Many Indians, once their indentured period was expired, took to different occupations such as gardening, and selling fruit and vegetables and the like in the Natal Colony. Denis in his writing about Indians in Natal traces their moves into central Durban where they found employment as labourers in the growing industries. The Durban municipality provided living quarters to many Indians in the Railway and the Magazine Barracks compounds. However it is recorded that the need for employment had encouraged Indians to move out of Durban from 1879 to Pietermaritzburg. The initial settlement was in the area of lower Church and Long Market Streets, which was then on the outskirts of the city.

> "…Others settled in parts of the Midlands and Northern Natal, while some settled in the Transvaal from about 1911". (Denis, 1995: 162)

4. 3 Indians in the Political life of South Africa

The first political elite amongst Indians arose from the trader class, the 'passenger" Indians, mostly merchants from Muslim background. According to Hilda Kuper's research: the 'Free Indians' were isolated and were not incorporated into any organization of the traders. The Indian traders' community considered them as people of no benefit.

The entrance of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi into South Africa in 1893 (today known as Mahatma Gandhi and the Father of Indian nation) brought Indians in general together as one community. He played an active role in giving Indians a political organization in South Africa. Gandhi came in 1893 to try to settle a business difficulty of some Gujarati clients. In his autobiography, The Story of my Experiments with Truth recalls a most painful, humiliating personal experience in a first class railway carriage in South Africa. He was thrown out of the first class carriage on racial grounds. Kuper in her writings says that this experience let Gandhi to identify the misfortunes of Indians in Natal. Gandhi's approach to this racisms issue in South Africa has marked a new era in South African History. Gandhi founded the Natal Indian Congress in 1884 and became secretary. Gandhi,

> "…Shaped Indian political action through the Natal Indian Congress".
> (Kuper, 1960: 45)

Kuper in her research lists the following important issues that faced the Indian community during Gandhi's time in South Africa and that were taken up by the Natal Indian Congress:

(a) Passenger Indians were treated in the same way as European colonists and granted full voting rights. These rights were extended to indentured labourers when freed from service. In 1893 a move by European settlers to disenfranchise the Indians was successful and in spite of opposition locally and overseas, Indians lost the parliamentary franchise in 1896.

(b) To form a colonial-born Indian Education Association, and with the support of passengers and indentured to improve the general conditions of all Indians.

(c) Issue of an annual tax of three Sterling imposed on 'free' Indians who failed to re-indenture or to deport themselves back to India.

(d) A Union High Court Judgment of 1913, which invalidated all marriages contracted in accordance with Indian tradition, thereby automatically making all

issue of such marriages illegitimate. No marriages could be recognized as valid if celebrated according to the rites of any religion practicing polygamy.

(e) The method Indians used to protest against the above issues was the Passive Resistance Campaign in which women of both passenger and indentured Indians participated. The scene of action and organization shifted from Gandhi's first settlement, Tolstoy Farm, in Transvaal (near Lenasia), where the Indian population was small and mainly Gujarati, to Phoenix in Natal, the area of indentured labourers. "The first Passive Resistance campaign emancipated Indian politics from the personal interests of traders and paved the way for the raising of political elite drawn from all sections of South African Indians". (Kuper, 1960: 46-47)

Gandhi left South Africa in 1914 and the divergent groups which he had brought together largely through his personal influence drifted into separate conflicting political camps.

The merchants caused the major split. They agreed to participate in the work of a Colonization Commission (the Young Commission) set up to investigate the possibilities of sending large numbers of South African Indians to other underdeveloped parts. A section of Indians opposed the collaboration between Indian merchants and the Young Commission of colonials. This opposing group, under the Leadership of a Christian lawyer and a Hindu of indentured parentage of kshatriya caste, formed in 1933 the Colonial-Born and Settlers Indian Association. The membership in this association represented an emerging middle class of ex-indentured descent, predominantly Hindu in faith.

A further split along religious lines took place in the Congress itself in 1936. A Muslim Indian Agent General from South Africa had married a South African Hindu woman. In protest to this Gujarati speaking Hindu leaders of Congress resigned from the party. This split resulted as

"Few joined the Colonial Born Association, most withdrew from political action. The nucleus of Congress that remained divided into antagonistic cliques on the basis of personal differences". (Kuper, 1960: 47)

Internal dissension was destroying the political effectiveness of the Indians as a group. In 1939 Sir Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan the great philosopher of India visited South Africa. He influenced the Natal Indian Congress and the Colonial Born Settlers to form together Natal Indian Association. However,

"The Muslim merchant leaders of Congress remained aloof and continued with, and in fact virtually became, Congress". (Kuper, 1960: 47)

This was a period of rapid educational advancement, a time when indentured Indians were drifting from agriculture to the towns. Indians were becoming semi-skilled operatives in new and expanding secondary industries. This was also a period influenced by revolutionary ideas on the Russian pattern which caused the emergence of various Unions both the interracial and racial. Kuper in her research records,

"Some Unions, organized on an industrial basis, were inter-racial, other Unions, more specifically craft Unions, were racially exclusive. The exclusion from various Unions (particularly in building industry) evoked the formation of non-European Unions with left-wing tendencies. They gave support not to the businessmen but to the radical young intellectuals. Together they became the 'Forward Bloc' and formed themselves into the Anti-Segregation Council. The threat by radicals led to a re-alliance of conservatives in opposition, and the Natal Indian Association merged again into Congress". (Kuper, 1960: 48)

However there emerged the 'South African Indian Organization' a conservative merchant Leaders clique, a relic of mercantile exclusiveness. These were those who were ousted from power in 1945 by the intellectuals and trade unionists of the Anti-Segregation

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Council who described conservative merchant leaders somewhat contemptuously as "The Old Guard".

However the Indians in South Africa continued to experience a deterioration of their position in South Africa in spite of resistance and negotiations. Kuper points out the following efforts even these could not prevent the deterioration of Indian position.

> "The Smuts-Gandhi Agreement (1914); the Paddison deputation from India (1925); the Beyers deputation from South Africa (1926); the Habibullah deputation from India (1926); culminating in the Cape Town Agreement". (Kuper, 1960: 48)

While Indians were trying to claim their political position in South Africa there was growing tension based on economic disparity between native Africans and Indian community. The Durban Riots' in 1949 unfolded this tension when African mobs attacked Indians and looted their property. The tension between Africans and Indians in Durban is to the economic disparity between these two communities. Indian people particularly the traders have flourished in South Africa and this had begun to sit uncomfortably in the psyche of native Africans. However both the South African Indian Organization and the Natal Indian Congress emphasized the need for good relationships between Indians and Africans. They both emphasized that the main objective should be the removal of discrimination based on race. Indians were welcomed in two other political parties of that time the Liberal Party which had inter-racial membership, and the Non-European Unity Movement which emphasized non-European membership and had strong membership of coloured teachers in Cape Town, but also included a few Indian intellectuals.

From amongst the indentured Indians in Natal and the Diamond Fields in Kimberley, some Indians came to live in Johannesburg in the 1880's. As per the census carried out in 1896 of the area within a distance of three miles from the Market place:

"It revealed that there were 50,907 Whites; 42,533 Africans; 3,831 Malays and Coloureds, and 4,807 Indians and Chinese, giving a total population of 102,078…President Kruger had set aside the "Coolie Location" as a residential area for Asians…. The "Coolie Location" occupied the site of the present Vrededorp and Pageview. There were substantial numbers of Indians living in City Suburban, eastern Braamfontein and the city centre". (Randall, 1967: 1)

For nearly three-quarters of a century, Indians lived in the central area of Johannesburg, particularly in the ring of inner suburbs to the west (Fordsburg, Vrededorp, and Ferreirastown). Indians had no political voice in government structure.

"Whatever decisions have been taken in regard to them as a community, decisions that effect their rights to live in certain areas, to follow certain occupations, to own land, to move from one area to another, have been taken by white government elected by white voters". (Randall, 1967: 2)

However, after the implementation of the Group Area Act, Lenasia became a group area for the Indians. This brought an end to Coolie Location.

"It is the declared policy of the present South African Government that all Johannesburg's Indian people must leave their homes in the city and move to Lenasia, a "Group Area" for Indians nineteen to twenty-two miles to the south-west of the City Hall". (Randall, 1967: 2)

On 1st March, 1964, *The Rand Daily Mail* reported that

"The Townships Board had approved the establishment of an Asiatic township at Lenz and that the Minister of the Interior had approved of the setting aside of land for this purpose. The proposed township was to be named Lenasia and would consist of 2700 plots, with the intention of providing accommodation for Indians

working in Johannesburg and West Rand towns, to which it was connected by rail and roads". (Randall, 1967: 13)

There was some resistance from the Indians living in Pageview in the hope that closer to the city there could be found another group area for Indians. But in February 1967 the minister of Community Development, of Indian Affairs and of Planning turned down the request for any more group area for Indians in Johannesburg.

The City Council of Johannesburg was instructed,

> "To proceed without further delay with the incorporation of Lenasia in its area of jurisdiction so that it can meet its responsibilities with regard to the development of the area for Indians which, is and ought to be its responsibility". (Randall, 1967: 32)

The political history of the Indians in Johannesburg as indeed in the country as a whole, has been one of discrimination on grounds of their descent, of restriction and of non-acceptance. The first Indians had hardly arrived on the Gold-fields when the Volksraad approved and enacted Law No. 3 of 1885 relating to Coolies, Arabs and other Asiatic. Under this law Asians could not,

> "Obtain the burgher right of the South African Republic". (Randall, 1967: 3)

In other words they could not own a fixed property in the Republic. Government had the right for purposes of sanitation, to assign to them certain streets, wards, and Locations to live in. It is recorded that

> "Since 1950, the Group Areas Act has been responsible for re-settling 240,000 persons classified as Indians and coloureds. Of this number 110000 were Indians. This has carried out in the name of slum clearance and city renewal". (Pachai, 1971: 279)

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In a survey to formulate an understanding from the perspective of non-Indians who may take an interest in the affairs of this community, one question asked was, has apartheid forced the Indian community to be more cohesive? I would like to record two responses to this question.

The first response to this question is from I. M. Bawa (attorney and Executive Director of the Islamic Council of South Africa);

> "The Government's policies based on race, emphasizing separateness on various grounds, have played a significant part in making the community more cohesive. Ironically, some sections as having given rise to or boosting their own cultural 'greatness' have welcomed this. This intensifying of the consciousness of the distinctiveness of the community has, however, to some extent acted as a restraint to intimate participation in the lives and welfare of the other communities, especially the black". (Arkin, s.a. 292)

And the second response is from Omar (attorney & National Chairman of the Democratic Party),

> "In the political sense, yes, to the point of being united in their opposition to racial injustice. Since 1984, however, like the other South African communities, Indians are divided in their response to dealing with the new realities developing in the country. In the non-political sense, the divisive influence of segregatory doctrines has accentuated certain areas of difference within the community itself. This would be natural in a society that is perforce divided not on value norms but on genetic factors". (Arkin, s.a. 292)

The unusual political character in South Africa had been that until 1994 the white minority controlled the reigns of government. Since 1652 the history of South Africa is characterized by unwavering determination of minority ruling white population. This has affected adversely,

"The economic and political position of the two other minority groups (Indians and Coloureds) as well as that of the majority group (the Africans)…". (Pachai, 1971: 275)

Up to the time of the coming into being of the Republic of South Africa in May 1961, and in spite of world refusing to accept the apartheid policy of South Africa, Professor Bridglal Pachai makes concluding remarks in his book The South African Indian Question 1860-1871,

> "The case of the South African Government is one of white survival which it sees as being synonymous with white supremacy and white civilization. Their opponents do not see that there are any scientific or logical grounds for the retention of these labels. In the sixties these labels came under heavy criticism within South Africa and without. In the seventies, the tempo of development and the general bases for thought, word and deed, especially among the younger generation, do not have room any more for them. They are anachronisms in a world, and an age, which does not accord a privileged position to 'the white race'…where do the South African Indians feature in all this? Their future is now merged with future of all the peoples of South Africa. There is no longer a South African Indian Question. There is only a South African Question. For mankind it is a Human Question". (Pachai, 1971: 282)

4.4 The Indian Business Community in South Africa

The position of Indian business in the economic structure in South Africa was pressed between two powerful opposing forces: Europeans who monopolized privileges through various restrictive techniques like law and sometimes convention; Africans who, by their better physique and preparedness to accept a lower scale of pay, started replacing Indians at the base of economic pyramid. About three quarters of the Indian labour force in 1951 were mostly semi-skilled and unskilled. Kupar finds in her research of this period,

> "A large number of Indians (almost one in seven) are regularly unemployed". (Kuper, 1960: 57)

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Hilda Kuper in her study observes three economic classes within the Natal Indian community. They were the working class, the middle class and the wealthy merchant class and independent professionals. Among majority of working class she finds two divisions: Banya mainly Gujarati community (merchants or businessmen) and not-Banya (workers) mainly Tamil, Telugu and Hindi speaking communities. However she locates in her research the emergence of ex-indentured elite in business and profession circles. She notes that,

> "Whereas until 30 years ago (1930) all the wealthiest businessmen were Gujarati speaking Muslims and Hindus of the passenger class, it is estimated that today about twenty-five percent are Tamil, Telugu and Hindi-speaking Hindu from the indentured class". (Kuper, 1960: 59)

4.5 Education and the Indian Community

The Indian community had always struggled to provide adequate education to their children in Natal. The Cape Town Agreement in 1927: marks a stage in Indian development in South Africa; the capitalization of western education. Initially, children who conformed in dress and habit to western standards were allowed to attend European private schools, but the state made no provision for other children, a few of whom went to schools started by Christian missionaries.

> "Later, by law 20 of 1878, the Indian immigrant School Board was created to care for the education of the children of the indentured immigrants, thus laying the basis for educational segregation, and in 1899 the Government discontinued the admission of Indian boys, and in 1905 of Indian girls, to European schools". (Kuper, 1960: 66)

The number of Indian intellectuals is still small in South Africa. The first passenger merchants, both Hindu and Muslim, were the least interested in Western education which was less profitable than business. The later passengers included Christians who already spoke English and who came in as teachers. For the poor, education provided the main

opportunity for upward mobility, and the ex-indentured showed the greatest desire for education.

There have been educated women, though the majority of women are ascribed only a domestic role.

The vulnerability of Indians in South Africa has been viewed in their inability to maintain their relationship with white people who reject them, with black people whose culture they can not incorporate and to wish to spread their own culture about which by now many of them are ignorant.

In South Africa Kuper in her research observes that difference among Indians in South Africa is based not on caste but between the indentured and passenger class. However it is important to point out that caste aspect were imbedded in these two different categories of people. Passenger Indians were mainly from upper caste trader community while indentured were from lower caste or untouchable background from India. However Kuper is right in saying,

> "…It is now being reduced by the upward mobility of the ex-indentured and the downward pressure from Europeans. Western education, which provided the main avenue of mobility for the descendants of the indentured and inculcated values which challenged both the traditional Indian and South African caste structure, was a strong influence in the shaping of a protest political elite". (Kuper, 1960: 79)

4.6 Different Associations among the Indian community

Indians were not integrated with the ruling white population. The government in South Africa suffered with unjust policies. Indians began to form associations based on their own different ethnic and linguistic origins. These associations were to make for internal cohesion in a minority group excluded from the central power of the state.

Personal ambitions of some individuals created sectional rivalries in these associations. The partition of India that gave birth to the nation of Pakistan led to the formation of some additional associations in South Africa. Hindu Muslim difference had surfaced on Kashmere issue in India. A further complication was viewed when most wealthy South African Muslims had their property in India,

"…But their emotional and political loyalty lies with Pakistan". (Kuper, 1960, 81)

This was the period when the Dravidian from South India expressed resentment against alleged claims of 'Aryan superiority'. They rejected the,

"…Traditional interpretations of ancient history which extolled the Aryans at the expense of the Dravidians". (Kuper, 1960: 81)

They began to advocate South Indian rituals and practices, rejection of Sanskrit language in local ritual, a non-Brahamanic priesthood, and teaching of Tamil language to their members.

However some leaders in the Tamil community countered such linguistic and cultural nationalist tendencies by emphasizing the eclectic philosophy of Hinduism. The amalgamating of the Young Men's Vedic Society and the Hindu Tamil Institute into the Natal Tamil Vedic Society is one of the few instances of the fusion of two associations into a single body.

There were exclusive associations such as 'the Kathiawad Hindi Seva Samaj' and 'Arya Pratinidhi Sabha'. The Andhra association for Telugu-speaking people in South Africa was accentuated with the creation of the independent state of Andhra in India. Hindu associations such as the Rama Krishna Center, The Divine Life Society and Arya Samaj have their centers of inspiration in India, and are more directly tied to their place of origin. Women were less involved in these associations. Indian thinkers also realized that

the formation of too many associations would create weakness in the minority groups, hence emphasis was given to more interaction amongst these associations.

4.7 Hindu Religion in South Africa

The Christians who came to South Africa from India were a minority. Hindus were the majority people amongst the indentured. With Hindu indentured and passenger Indians, Hinduism traveled to South Africa. Knowledge of the Hindu religion and its teachings varies in terms of different emphases based on different sacred literature of Hinduism. God in Hinduism has many forms and hence can be spoken about with different names.

Hinduism culturally cannot be recognized as homogenous. Hinduism exists in different linguistic and cultural groups in India. Such differences are realized

> "In South Africa between two linguistic and cultural groups – Hindi and Gujarati speaking groups of Northern India and Tamil and Telugu of Southern Indian origin". (Kuper, 1960: 95-96)

The concept of kinship historically among the Indian community plays an important role in transmitting social values and behaviour to the next kinsmen and generation. These values govern the identity of the kinship and in the process regulate the social life of the community.

Hilda Kuper acknowledges the influence of this kinship concept within South African Indian community.

> "Kinsmen are regarded by South African Hindus as of primary importance…best known amongst the Hindi and Gujarati section as the kul or kutum, and amongst Tamil and Telugu speakers as kudumam or kudumor". (Kuper, 1960: 97)

It is important to observe economic deprivation and apartheid policy, resulting in the conglomeration of Indians from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, has

prevented the caste injunction of Hinduism. The contributory factor to the lack of caste practice in South Africa is due to ignorance of the knowledge of Hinduism among indentured Indians in South Africa. Indians in South Africa are not rigidly divided as per the code of Manu.

In contemporary South Africa Dr. C.G. Henning, the director of the Indian Documentation Centre also observes that,

> "Though Indian politics is based on casteism, the concept of a caste-based society is almost outdated among Indians in South Africa and not more than 2 percent of Indians here believe in the caste system". (Naik, 2000: 172)

However, though it is noted that casteism is not so severely practiced in South Africa, it is important to note that the Indian community is now class conscious based on business and social status and in some cases, particularly among the Gujarati community, caste consciousness is vividly observed.

Hilda Kuper records the followings writings that the Hindu religion refers to for its practice in South Africa. She points out that the teachings of classical Hinduism continue to influence the Hindu Community in South Africa, may not be so acutely as in India.

Vedas are generally considered to be "Sruiti" or 'revealed wisdom'. There are four Vedas: Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda and Atharvaveda. Each Veda consists mainly of Mantras or holy invocations addressed to various powers and aspects of Universe, e.g. Agni (fire), and Indra (rain).
Upanishads or Vedanta: the word means knowledge and represents the highest form of Hindu Philosophy.

The Brahamanas: detailed instructions for priests in carrying out devotions.

Puranas: there are eighteen recognized Puranas. They developed from Vedic writings and deal with history, cosmogony, beliefs and rituals. They are regarded as the writings of different 'rishis' (holy men), who expounded in elaborate detail religion and social life for the masses.

The Agmas are distinct from Vedic literature and were developed by the Dravidians. The Sakti Agama is the basis of many cult practices in Durban.

Tantras: the main idea of Tantras, derived from Agamas, is the deification of the objects of the senses so as to overcome attachment to those objects, but in the hands of some of its followers the Tantric Cult degenerated into orgiastic rituals.

Smritis and Sutri are the work of learned men, and relate to marriage, morals, economics, government and various other social relationships. The 'Smriti' include the institutes of Manu (roughly of the same period as the Puranas), which, though not legally recognized in South Africa, are used as religious sanctions of social behaviour by conservatives.

Mahabharata and Ramayana are epic literature written circa 500-300 B.C. which bring the teachings of the Vedas to the lay masses, provide them with a comprehensive pantheon and ethic, and identify cultural heroes with the divinity.

The Bhagvad Gita, or Song of God, is the quintessence of the teaching of the Upanishads, and form part of Mahabharata.

Devotional Liturgies: An immense body of literature is written in the Tamil language. The earliest Tamil writings consist of devotional songs of the saints collected together in Tiru-Muai. In Durban the best known are Tiru-vacakam by Manika Vasagar, Tevaram by Sri Agpar, Sri Gnana Sambandar and Sri Sundra Murti, and Aruppa by Ramalinga Swamigal.

4. 8 Hindu Theological Philosophical Treatises

The Indian Hindu philosophers and various philosophical treatises are well acknowledged by the South African Indian Community. Hilda Kuper in her research mentions about treatise such as Sankya, Vaiseshika and Patanjali are well known among Hindu community. The well-known Hindu philosophers, for example Radhakrishnan, Swami Dayanand and Swami Sivananda, have great influence amongst Hindu intellectuals in South Africa.

Hilda Kuper has also observed the active presence of cult ceremonies among the Indians in South Africa.

> "This identification is psychological and physical, and is known as *murril* in Tamil and *deota* in Hindi. It is translated into English as "the trance" or "god-possession". (Kuper, 1960: 217)

The impact of the trance can be "good" or "bad". It is based on the nature of the possessing deity. If it is "good" it is encouraged within certain limits. And if it is "bad" it is itself treated as a disease that must be "driven out".

Some other cult ceremonies practiced among Indians in South Africa

> "Are "*kavady*" (wooden frames carried on the shoulder), in honour of Subrahmanya, "fire walking" for Draupadi, *garo gum* (ritual brass urns used to represent divinity) for 'seven sisters' and 'offerings and sacrifices' for Mariamma…trance expressed in several forms was encouraged at small temples devoted to the *Sakti* (Kali, Durga, Gengema, Dundamari, Angaalisperi), and several male deities including Hanuman, Perumalsami and Madurai Veeran". (Kuper, 1960: 218)

Most of the deities represented in rituals amongst Hindus and Tamils in South Africa are well known in Brahmanic Hinduism. Some of them are the Trimurthi (Brahman, Vishnu,

and Siva), Hanuman, Ganessa, Subrahmanya, Rama, Krishna, and a range of female deities; Sarswati, Lakshmi, Kali, Durga and Draupadi, representing Sakti, the female principle, or creativity, or motherhood. However in South Africa the deities of all groups are enshrined in most of the Hindu temple. Therefore it becomes quite difficult to find clear distinction between the followers of Saivists, Vaishnavas and Saktas.

It is also observed that religious ceremonies are family oriented. A priest has a busy diary in performing various ceremonies in different homes. These ceremonies are held to please different gods, to be blessed and protected by them. Therefore,

> "No sharp distinction can be drawn between public and domestic temples (both are known as *mandir* in Hindi *kovil* in Tamil), and the ceremonies performed in the public temples are all rooted in family life… In both cases the worshippers are groups of kinsmen who may make their devotions at any number of temples and through any number of deities". (Kuper, 1960: 198)

In a survey to formulate a response from the perspective of non-Indians who may take an interest in the affairs of this community; the following two questions and the response are recorded in this thesis to observe the impact of western influence on Indian culture and tradition in South Africa.

The first question: How 'western' is the Indian community and how much is left of Indian traditions?

And the second question: Which aspects of Indian culture still remain? Which are endangered?

The extract is from the first response from P Poovalingam (attorney & leader of the Progressive Reform Party - the Progressive Federal Party), who observes that changes have mainly taken places from 1940 onwards,

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"… The rate and pace of westernization is rapid, the rapidity intensified by the impact of television. Notwithstanding that, there is resurgence of interest in cultural matters namely music and the dance and the Indian language. The Indian community can safely be said (allowing always for the hazards of generalization) to be at least 50 percent westernized. In Natal at least 80 percent have English as the first language… (Arkin s.a: 278)

The following extract from the response of J.B. Patel covers a large area of change though he does point out that religion does help in retaining languages and cultural practices, for example learning of Arabic in the Muslim religion and various customs related to marriage and worship in different temples and sects. However, he says that

"Since the time our forbears came to South Africa… they changed completely to the western way of dressing, more so with the modern youth. This applies to both males and females…The most endangered are the use of vernacular language, which is fast declining. There is a danger that future generations may progressively discard vernacular languages". (Arkin s.a: 277-278)

While discussing Hindu Theological Philosophical Treatises it is also important to note that there has been growing disruption to the growth of classical Hinduism in South Africa. Hinduism has lost the following of its sub-groups mainly from Tamils and Telugu who have join Saivism or Sai Baba groups.

"...The Saivite and Sai Baba groups within Hinduism were found to have given quite a number of Hindus from the Tamil and Telugu groups a new sense of religious identity". (Oasthuizen s.a: 46)

4. 9 Conclusion

The indentured Indians of south Indian background predominantly belonged to the oppressed community in India. They would have thought that their arrival in South Africa would improve their status. But unfortunately they had no respite from exploitation and oppression. This journey was more painful. After coming to South Africa they lost their identity beyond recovery. The caste system in India had destroyed their human identity but in South Africa they completely lost their moorings. At least in the Indian caste system they could trace their roots. This loss of roots had a deep negative impact on the psyche of the Indian people in South Africa. This study intends to help in limited way at least the Christian community in South Africa to connect with their roots.

It is interesting to note that for the indentured Indian community survival was the main issue rather than religion or culture. The Hindu religion and Indian culture would be preserved due to the efforts of passenger Indians in South Africa.

The passenger Indians who came to South Africa have been able to maintain their links with India. This community continued to remain as an elite Indian group in South Africa. Though casteism is not practiced rigidly amongst the Indian community in South Africa, the divide between the North and South Indian communities is quite deep. This division is evident particularly when marriages are arranged. Hilda Kuper records in her research an emerging self-consciousness amongst Tamil Indians who acknowledged themselves as Dravidian from South India and reject Aryan superiority. There have also been movements from one sub-group to another within the Hindu religion.

However, Indians in general have suffered from racism in South Africa. They have been humiliated through segregation through the Group Areas Act, and also they sat uncomfortably in the minds of the local African people. Their identity in South Africa had always been a crucial issue for them. They wanted to identify with the Europeans, and when rejected they tended to identify with the local Africans.

The next chapter will highlight the ministry of the Anglican Church among the poor indentured labourers. The Social services of the Church had changed and transformed the lives of many indentured Indians in South Africa. Many of them had converted to Christianity in response to the services they had received from the Church.

CHAPTER FIVE

A Brief Outline of the History of Christianity in South Africa and the work of Anglican Mission amongst Migrant Indian Community

5. 1 Introduction

Isichei in her study of African history finds Khoi (Hottentots) and San (Bushmen) inhabitant in South Africa. They had light complexioned. They spoke related but otherwise, unique click languages.

The Khoi were pastoralists and the San hunter-gatherers. The Khoi began raising livestock when they acquired animals from Bantu-speaking peoples moving southward across the Limpopo.

> "Archaeological research established the arrival of the iron-using Bantu in South Africa from at least AD 200, and perhaps earlier. Their striking terracotta sculptures, dating from the fifth and sixth centuries AD, have been found in the eastern Transvaal. (Isichei, 1995: 101)

These Bantu people today account for three-quarters of the total population. In the seventh century, perhaps twenty thousand San, and between one hundred thousand and two hundred thousand Khoi lived South of the Orange River.

> "By 1800, they were decimated, partly by violence, but above all, by introduced diseases, especially small pox". (Isichei, 1995: 101)

5. 2 Brief Outline of the History of Christianity in South Africa

From 1600 onwards, ships sailing to India stopped at the Cape to replenish their stores and water. In 1652, the Dutch East India Company founded a permanent station there. At first it was a small enclave around Cape Town, but it later became a colony. Dutch settlers came and farmed in the vicinity. By 1710, there were about 2000 of them, and

rather more slaves. The modern Afrikaners are descendent from this quite small eighteenth-century population.

Slaves were first introduced in 1658. They were predominantly Malagasy or Malay. Indeed, the people who call themselves Cape Folk ('Cape Coloured') have Dutch, Khoi, and Malay/Malagasy forbears.

The Cape became a British Colony in 1795. The first large influx of British settlers was in 1820. Afrikaners, like so many other pastoralists in southern Africa, embarked on the series of migrations their descendents were to call the Great Trek in search of a new home. In the process, they forged a sense of national identity, where religion was the central component. They saw themselves as folk in exodus, a chosen people of God, who survived because of His special care for them.

In 1838 Afrikaners in Natal won a bloody victory over the Zulu army. Some of the Trekkers, the Doppers, were extremely conservative Puritanical Calvinists, and believed that their journeys were chartered by the prophet Joel and would end in the discovery of the New Jerusalem, which is a dream strangely close to that of the amaZioni, the Zulu people of Zion.

The Voortekkers founded two new branches of the Dutch Reformed Church: the Hervormde Kerk in the Transvaal (1853) and a Church established in 1859, in the Dopper tradition. It has been suggested that the ultimate wellspring of apartheid is to be founded in these frontier churches. The Afrikaners founded two small states (the South African Republic), in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. They were economically weak and relied on pastoralism, much like their African neighbours.

The history of South Africa was transformed by the rediscovery, first of diamonds in 1867, and then of gold in 1886. From being in global terms an economic backwater, South Africa became of crucial importance to industrial capitalism. The discoveries led to the growth to new cities, and the railway network. The spread of British Imperialism was

to swallow up the Boer Republics, and those African states that still remained independent. The white population of the twentieth century South Africa was to consist of two distinct groups, the English-speaking people, and the Afrikaners.

The missionary enterprise in South Africa is often dated from the arrival of the first LMS (London Missionary Society) representative, van der Kemp, in 1799, although the few Moravians did, in fact, precede him. The first missionary work took place among the victims of Mfecane (a Zulu word that means grinding). It is conventionally used for a great complex of migrations that had their origins in wars among the northern Nguni in the late eighteenth century and of white settlements: The Khoi, the Mfengu, and the frontier Xhosa. Christianity took root most readily among the uprooted: the Griqua of the frontier, and the Mfengu who fled from their homes during the Mfecane. Conversion to Christianity involved dislocation, a break from the traditions of the past, and it came more easily to those who had endured disruption already. The ethnically mixed communities of the South African frontier welcomed Christianity, a transition made more readily as the individuals that comprised these communities had already moved far from their original culture. Christianity offered a new identity, a place on which to stand. In Natal and Zululand Christians remained marginal.

However, for much of the nineteenth century, the missionaries often had curiously little success. Moffat admitted that he had fewer Christians than fruit trees, and Livingstone became an explorer largely because he was discouraged by the lack of converts in his southern Tswana mission station.

Those who became Christians were often ostracized or punished, yet they also experienced discrimination from their white co-religionists. An African Methodist said in 1863,

> "To the natives we are but despised believers – to the English we are no more than Kaffirs". (Isichei, 1995: 100)

In 1911 – when there were over 30 missionary societies and 1650 missionaries there – it was said that

> "South Africa may well claim to being, with the possible exception of the South Sea Islands, the best occupied mission field in the world". (Isichei, 1995: 100)

In South Africa a decade of missionary endeavour produced only a small number of converts. It is a paradox that the most famous missionary names belong to the nineteenth century – Livingston, the Moffats, the Hinderers, Mary Slessor – where, as the expansion of Christianity took place in the twentieth, and then largely through the work of evangelists.

> "A famous study of the catechist is called "Missionaries to Yourselves", and these words encapsulate the essential core of modern Africa". (Isichei, 1995: 98-99)

The other reason for the lack of conversion was the farm owners for example in Cape Town amongst the Malagasy and Malay:

> "Their owners often opposed their baptism as Christian slaves could not be sold, and had some claim to manumission…Not surprisingly, many slaves, especially in Cape Town, became Muslims instead". (Isichei, 1995: 103)

In 1772, a visitor to a farmhouse found the women slaves singing psalms:

> "Their master…ad prevailed with them to adopt his Godly custom; but with the spirit of economy which universally prevails among these colonists, he had not permitted them to be initiated into the community of Christians by baptism; since by that means …they have obtained their freedom". (Isichei, 1995: 103)

J.B. Brain in his research on Christian Indians in Natal mentions that the active denominations from which Christians came to South Africa includes,

"American, Canadian and British Baptists, Danish Lutherans, Anglicans, Basel Mission, Wesleyan Methodist and Methodist Episcopal Church, Reformed Church of America, Scottish Presbyterians and Syrian Christians". (Brain, 1983: 157-160)

This chapter will mainly deal with Anglican Christians emigrating from India into Natal and the Ministry of Anglican Church amongst Indians in South Africa.

The first group of immigrants arrived on the Truro in November 1860.

"These were followed by regular shipments until July 1866. About 6,445 persons disembarked during this period. The immigration was halted on the complain*t that* the indentured labour *had* completed their contract in South Africa and *had* returned back to India. It was only initiated again in 1874 and thereafter a steady stream of men and women and children arrived each year until the Natal scheme was finally terminated by the Indian authorities in 1911". (Brain, 1983: 4)

This study leans on J.B. Brain's research which recorded the data on the immigration of Indians in South Africa by studying the original sources i.e. immigration records kept at the Department of Indian affairs. Of the 91 volumes, 62 are concerned with ships from Madras and 29 with vessels from Calcutta. He has attempted to estimate as accurately as possible the number of Christians from various denominations in India amongst the 152 184 (one hundred and fifty two thousand and hundred and forty) indentured immigrants. He records in his research, statistic*s* of baptism and marriages of the Roman Catholic, Methodist and Anglican churches. Anglican records of these baptism*s* were searched in both Durban and Pietermaritzburg, at St. Aidan's Mission, at St. John's Church, Pine Town, St. Cyprian's, Congella, St. James and St. Matthias parishes and with the assistance of the Rectors at Estcourt, Ladysmith, Ispingo, Newcastle, Verulam

(Maidstone), Richmond and Umzinto. He also shows the extent of the evangelical work carried out by the various Christian denominations in Natal.

5. 3 The term Anglican/Anglicanism – As understood and defined in Anglican Communion/Church

The root of the Anglican Church is located in a complex historical set up. John in his study on Anglicanism records that

> "The Church of England emerged from its first century as an autonomously governed body with a character that distinguished it from other European churches. 'Anglican', as a term for a particular way of understanding and practicing Christianity… appeared only in the nineteenth century; but distinctive forms of Anglican faith and practice were shaped 300 years earlier. Anglicanism began to evolve as English people shared in those movements of reformation and counter-reformation, which divided the church of western Christendom into denominational divisions that have persisted to our own day". (John, 1988: 3)

John has mentioned about three Anglican theologians who tried to define Anglicanism. They are,

Professor John Macqurrie in 1970. For him,

> "Anglicanism has never considered itself to be a sect or denomination originating in the sixteenth century. It continues without a break the Ecclesia Anglicana founded by St. Augustine thirteen centuries ago, though nowadays that branch of the Church has spread far beyond the borders of England.

Bishop H.R. McAdoo in 1965 in his understanding of Anglicanism argued that,

> "Anglicanism is not a theological system and there is no writer whose work is an essential part of it either in respect of content or with regard to the form of its self

– expression....an absence of an official theology in Anglicanism is something deliberate which belongs to its essential nature, for it has always regarded the teaching and practice of the undivided Church of the first five centuries as criterion.

For Late Bishop Stephen Neil, in 1958,

"There are no special Anglican doctrines, there is no particular Anglican theology...in the strict sense of the term there is, therefore, no Anglican faith". (John 1988: 424-425)

A broader definition of the Anglican Church can be found in the Report of Lambeth Conference of 1930. By now Anglican Church has spread beyond England. Lambeth conference did acknowledge this reality and expressed in 1930,

"We desire emphatically to point out that the term 'Anglican' is no longer used in the sense it originally bore. The phrase 'Ecclesia Anglicana' in the Magna Carta had a purely local connotation. Now its sense is ecclesiastical and doctrinal, and the Anglican Communion includes not merely those who are racially connected with England, but many others whose faith has been grounded in the doctrines and ideals for which Church of England has always stood. What are these doctrines? We hold the Catholic faith in its entirety: that is to say, the truth of Christ, contained in Holy Scripture; stated in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds; expressed in the Sacraments of the Gospel and the rites of the Primitive Church as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer with its various local adaptations; and safeguarded by the historic threefold Order of the Ministry". (John, 1988: 425)

5.3.1 The work of the Anglican Church among Indian people in South Africa

In South Africa the arrival of Anglicanism was relatively late. The growth of the Anglican Church is attributed to three interrelated factors. Hinchcliff in his study on Anglicanism in South Africa list these factors. They are,

"Firstly, the Cape Colony became a British possession in 1815; secondly, the arrival of British officials and settlers gave the Cape a permanent English-speaking population. The third, and probably the most significant factor, was the consecration of Robert Gray in Westminster Abbey in 1847 as the first Bishop of Cape Town: this fact coupled with his subsequent arrival at Cape in 1848, gave the Church a permanent Leader". (Hinchliff, 1963: 30-31)

In 1824, the Zulus - the northern Nguni – were under the powerful chieftainship of Shaka. It is at this time English traders arrived in Natal. However the trading activities between the Nguni and white traders caused conflicts in Natal.

Bishop Robert Gray the first Bishop of Cape Town, from the outset set his vision for a mission to all South Africans. This led him to visit during 1849, communities living in various parts of Southern Africa, especially those in the Eastern Cape and Natal. Bishop Gray for a better pastoral and organizational functioning of the Church divided his large and unwieldy diocese by appointing two more bishops. One for Eastern Cape and the other for Natal and he himself remained as metropolitan over these two saffragans bishops.

"In 1853 the Crown delegated and defined the Bishop's authority, "Gray in his capacity as Metropolitan of the Church of South Africa, and in the same year the Archbishop of Canterbury consecrated John Armstrong and John William Colenso as bishops of Natal". (Govinden, 2002: 9)

The first Bishop of Natal Bishop Colenso focused his ministry on the Zulu people. He was of the view that effective ministry was only possible if missionaries made attempts to understand the culture of the indigenous people so that

"...We may look for greater success in missionary labours, and far more stability in the converts that may be made, than by seeking to all things new to them – to

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uproot their old religion, scoffing at things which they hold most sacred…"
(Govinden, 2002, 9)

However, this ideology and his tolerance of polygamy among the Zulus caused a great drift between him and Bishop Robert Gray.

For the Anglican Church right from the beginning the gospel and cultural issues were of major concern. Bishop Colenso's excommunication from the Anglican Church speaks of the mind of Anglicans in that period as non-tolerance to any unconventional or liberal approach in relation to the Bible or the mission of the Church. Recently however, there has been something of a revival of interest in Bishop Colenso and his work.

The other overwhelming problem church in general had faced in South Africa was the racial issue. Afrikaners had the conviction that by divine ordinance the African belongs to an essentially and permanently inferior race and the British in South Africa exploited the natives for cheap labour and avoided taking responsibility for their welfare. They always maintained racial prejudice towards the black and the Asian communities.

Many Europeans had no desire to promote education among the coloured people. Church was placed in a delicate position in exercising the principles of Jesus Christ in their ministry. If they supported the cause of the coloured, white community for encouraging miscegenation dreaded them. If they did not they appeared to deny in practice what they preached about Jesus Christ.

While Anglicans were embroiled in Colenso controversy, during 1864 – 1882 Roman Catholics and the Wesleyan-Methodists had established themselves among the Christian immigrants and the Wesleyan-Methodists were also conducting vigorous evangelizing campaigns among the non-Christians.

After Bishop Colenso's excommunication by Metropolitan Gray, Natal was declared vacant in 1864. It took five years to fill this vacancy with a different title. The

Metropolitan in St. George's Cathedral, Cape Town, consecrated William Kenneth Macrorie on 26th January 1869 as the Bishop of Maritzburg.

It is noticed that mission amongst Indian population did not grow easily. It was due to the

> "Shortage of Indian evangelists, who could preach in vernacular languages, severely hindered progress. Low stipends paid to the clergy did little to encourage the youth to train for the ministry. Consequently, during the first fifty years, the majority of the mission staff was recruited from either England or India". (St. Aidan's Mission, 1883 – 1983: 9)

There was no ministry from the Anglican Church to the Indian communities from 1860 – 1877. Various factors impeded the evangelization of the Indians. There prevailed strong anti-Indian feelings among the white community. The local white community did not support Indian mission. Ministry to Indian only,

> "Began in 1878, in Magazine Barracks, under the guardianship of Bishop Macrorie". (Phillip, 1995: 163)

The same year H.F. Wittington, the vicar of St. Cyprian's Church, Durban, started conducting Tamil services for six Indian families. Some time later, St. Aidan's mission was established at 49, Cross Street, close to the Magazine Barracks, before moving in 1883 to Alice Street. Philip in his study on the growth of Indian Church in Pietermaritzburg finds that

> "St. Paul's Church was established as a school cum chapel at 10 George Street, Pietermaritzburg… Due to linguistic difficulty, very little progress was made in the field of evangelism as the majority of Indians could only speak the vernacular". (Philip, 1995: 163)

In 1883 John Thomas, a teacher from India and a catechist, assumed responsibility for the school cum chapel. Much progress was achieved under his leadership. Many were converted from Hinduism to Christianity, and a number of other Christians joined St. Paul's Church on account of his dynamism.

5.3.2 The Period 1883 - 1900

The beginning of the Anglican Indian Missions in Natal is attributed to the labour of Dr. Lancelot Parker Booth. In 1883 Dr. Lancelot Parker Booth became an assistant to the Bishop for the Indian population and was appointed to take charge of the Mission to the Indian immigrants. In 1885 Dr. Booth's oversight was extended beyond St. Aidan's in Durban to St. Paul's Mission in Pietermaritzburg. With the appointment of Dr. Booth as Superintendent in 1889, the Indian Missions in Natal took root.

Dr. Booth was born in England in 1850 and studied medicine at the University of Edinburgh. He suffered with chest problems and was encouraged to live in a sunny climate. Withdrawing from studies temporarily, he visited Natal in 1873. During this time he observed the emerging British Colony with its many social and political problems.

> "He was appalled at the conditions of the Indian labouring classes, particularly at the poverty, the illiteracy, the low standard of living, the lack of medical facilities and he felt the urgent need for their spiritual upliftment". (St. Aidan's Mission, 1883– 983: 2)

He resolved to return to Natal. After completing his qualification in medicine he immediately embarked on a career in the Natal Indian Immigration Department as a medical officer and district surgeon.

Booth was given a Bishop's license as lay reader at St. Patrick's Parish in Umzinto when he offered his services to the Diocese as a medical missionary. At Umzinto in the County of Alexander, his work brought him into contact with indentured labourers and their families living on the sugar estates. He was deeply moved by the poverty, and the

absence of spiritual nurture amongst Indians. After seeing their condition he resolved to relinquish his position in favour of dedicating himself to the spiritual and medical well being of the immigrants. In 1883 he relinquished his position as district surgeon from the Natal Indian Immigration Department and offered himself to the Diocese of Maritzburg as a voluntary worker for two years.

> For this dedication the then "Bishop Macrorie ordained him to the diaconate in 1883 and subsequently appointed him as 'Assistant to the Bishop for the Indian population". (Govinden, 2002: 32)

It is in the same year 1883 that Booth founded St. Aidans Mission, having been inspired by the life and work of St. Aidan, the legendary Missionary Bishop of Lindisfarne, working on a semi-island off the east coast of Scotland. Booth's work of evangelism was realized through educational institutions and medical services for the underprivileged amongst the Indian community in Durban.

An extract from a report received in 1885 from the SPCK read as follows,

> "The standing committee (of the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge) regarded Mr. Booth's work (in Indian Mission) as of great interest, and deserving of as substantial support as the Society could give ". (Govinden, 2002: 34)

A grant of one hundred pounds was made available. With this timely help from the SPCK, Dr. Booth has been enabled to build St Aidan Hospital. Through the ministry of St. Aidans as reported by Bishop Macrorie in 1887,

> "We had six adults baptized on the occasion, almost the first fruits of the Hindu population". (Govinden, 2002: 34-35)

Booth's work earned him a status of Canon and an appointment as Superintendent of the Indian Missions. He also was granted the privileges of a *beneficed* (vicar) priest in the Diocese.

The continual lack of financial, human and physical resources hampered the progress of the Indian Missions. In spite of generous help from SPG and SPCK to the diocese, Bishop Macrorie constantly urged the local churches to make sacrificial giving a priority. The standing committee on Indian Missions encouraged Dr. Booth to travel to India to recruit Indian clergy and catechists for conducting services and evangelistic campaigns in languages familiar to the immigrants in Natal. Dr. Booth was able to recruit three deacons; Simon Vedamuthu and Solomon Vedakan in 1890 were ordained to the priesthood in 1894. Joseph Nallathumby arrived in 1892 and was ordained to the priesthood in 1895. Unfortunately Vedakan was sent back to India in 1895 due to lack of financial support. Apart from them Dr. Booth had also acquired the services of catechists from among local immigrants. Some of them were teaching in the mission school.

> "They were assigned to work in and around St. Aidan's Mission and St. Paul's Mission: Subban Godfrey (Durban), Anboo Royeppen (Umbilo), Phillip Pakkianathan (Sydenham) and Mark Pakkianathan (Pietermaritzburg) The SPG sent Miss Esther Payne-Smith (a daughter of the Dean of Canterbury) who chose St. Paul's Mission as her field". (Govinden, 2002: 36)

St. Aidan's Mission grew. It included Sydenham, where in 1898 Swamikan Nullathumby arrived from India to assist as lay worker-cum-teacher at South Coast Junction (suburbs of Durban) where services were held at Manickum Royeppen's residence.

> "Subsequently a small wood and iron structure was erected on the south bank of the Umbilo River and opened for worship in 1892". (St. Michael and All Angels 1992: 6)

St. Paul's Mission made a slow but steady progress.

> "In Pietermaritzburg a site was acquired for St. Paul's at the corner of George and Longmarket Streets, and the new church was built and consecrated on 29 June 1894". (St. Paul's Parish 1974)

Commenting on the progress made in the Indian Missions, Bishop Arthur Hamilton Baynes, who succeeded Bishop Macrorie in 1893, stated that

> "…The medical department has the Mission in touch with all sorts of conditions of Indian people, while the establishment of schools for the children has led to the baptism of parents as well as the work, both among the Tamil and Hindi speaking people, is full of hope and promise…" (Govinden, 2002: 37)

Dr. Booth, during the Anglo Boer was responsible for initiating a corps of Indian stretcher-bearers for services. A leading spirit of this volunteer movement was Mr. M.K. Gandhi …the well-known Indian barrister. Booth enjoyed a close relationship with Gandhi when they worked together in the dispensary whenever possible. As there were no other medical facilities easily accessible, Gandhi encouraged a few members of the Indian community to assist Booth wherever possible.

In the first quarter of 1900 Dr. Booth announced his resignation as Superintendent and gave notice of his impending departure from the Diocese of Natal – without apparently, stating his reasons. This sudden decision was received with much sadness and regret.

After Booth the diocese continued to appoint superintendents to the Indian Missions over the period of 1901 – 1934. The superintendents during this period were Canon Arthur Halstead Smith (1902 – 1909), the Revd. Arthur Alcock Baillie (1910 – 1916), The Revd. Cecil Mathew Charlotti Bone (was not the Superintendent), (1916 – 1920), The Revd. George Hibbert-Ware (1921 – 1930), and The Rt. Revd. Charles James Ferguson-Davie

(1931 – 1933). It will be helpful to note some of the challenges faced by each Superintendent during this period.

Canon Arthur Halstead Smith in his report to the Synod in 1902 acknowledged the growth of the Church. However, he also made the confession about the sins committed against Indians by highlighting their inability to do enough for the Indians. He writes that

> "The Indian population had risen to 72 965 (of whom 47 599 were 'free' Indians and 25 366 were indentured) and that the majority wanted to make Natal their permanent home. However Canon Arthur said, we can not but feel that as a Church we are doing a mere nothing to raise morally and spiritually this large number of souls for whom Christ died…and we have to remember that in bringing over the Indians for the sake of our material prosperity, we are exposing them to the great danger of moral deterioration, not only in subjecting and hearing the vices of the dominant race, but also in cutting them adrift in great measure from their own social safeguard and restraints…we use and employ them, and are actually dependent on their labour, yet we barely give a chance to taste even the crumbs which fall from our spiritual tables". (Govinden, 2002: 44-45)

The Revd Arthur Alcock Baillie (1910 – 1916) summarized his perspective on the future of Anglican Indian Missions in Natal,

> "If our Church Mission to Indians is to hold its place in the colony, our primary need is evangelists; we can both find and train them, and we have work for half-a-dozen, had we have only some means to support them. We are falling behind the other Indian Missions in point of numbers and adherents". (Govinden, 2002: 52)

He also questioned the lack of diocesan support, which hampered the work when viewed from the missionary standpoint.

He asks, "How are we in any way aided to carry out missionary work? …Do our church people believe in the evangelization of our Indians? I must go on to point out that there is little or no support from the diocese for the real missionary work, and appeals for grants for catechists and other workers have up to the present met with no response. Our paid workers received their payments from the SPG, not Natal". (Govinden, 2002: 56)

Bishop Revd. Cecil Mathew Charlotti Bone (1916 – 1920) who did not enter as Mission Superintendent did touch on the apathy displayed by the majority of church people in the Diocese to the work of the Indians. He wrote,

"May I venture to suggest that colour-prejudice is at the root of a good deal of this lack of support". (Govinden, 2002: 58)

The third Superintendent after Booth was The Revd. George Hibbert-Ware (1921 – 1930). His superintendence heralded Synod's acceptance of a resolution, which facilitated the management of the different missions in the diocese. Accordingly, approval was given for the lay representation of the various 'Native', Indian and Coloured congregations at Synod. Thus St. Aidan's and St. Paul's were each entitled to one lay member of the Synod. During this time various corrective measures were taken which included rigid economy to reduce general expenses, closing down the work that from a missionary point of view could be not spared and had involved the mission in debt, and selling property of the mission wherever it deemed necessary. Hibbert-Ware warned the Synod that the issue of the lack of resources for developments in evangelistic work would continue to be a problem so long as the diocese made this a burden of the Missions alone. He recommended that Indians should be given an opportunity of having organized congregations where they could develop further. They should not be left alone where they find no congregation to worship.

Bishop Baines echoed the above remarks and added that he was conscious, too, of the fact that Indian Mission work was unpopular among White congregations. The mere

presence of Indians in Natal, whatever the explanation of their coming may have been, was resented.

In 1931, The Rt. Revd. Charles James Ferguson-Davie (1931 – 1933) was appointed Superintendent of Missions. Ferguson Davie echoed the regret expressed by his predecessors; due to small staff, the pastoral work among the congregations was carried out at the expense of evangelistic work among non-Christians. Another cause of disappointment was the Diocesan Finance Board's decision to reduce the grant to the Indian Missions just when an extension of work in the Missions was being considered.

After Ferguson Davie in 1934 an amendment to Act IX, section 3 (of 1922), through which Indians were included on Synod as representative from Indian Mission Committee. In 1946 Archdeacons replaced the position of the superintendent.

Archdeacon Eustance H. Wade, Chairman of the Durban Indian Mission Committee (IMC), was forthright on the question of evangelization among Indians. He pointed out two major issues. The first had to do with lack of evangelistic zeal of the Church and the second lack of funds to do mission among Indian community.

Archdeacon W.R.P. Evans, Chairperson of the Pietermaritzburg Indian Mission Committee encouraged the European presence not only to be for converting Indian people but as friends and as human. He said if this happens than,

> "…Indian communities might thus be led to feel that Europeans are interested in them not merely as potential religious scalps, but also as individuals". (Govinden, 2002: 73)

In 1964 Archdeacon A.J. Rowley, Chairman of the Pietermaritzburg Indian Mission Committee, stated that many enquiries were being made by Hindus interested in the Christian faith. He encouraged to instill into Christianity, but

"Firstly, the need for personal witness in a hostile world assailed by a resurgent Hinduism, militant Islam and political pressure." And, secondly, the need to evangelize or stagnate". (Govinden, 2002: 73-74)

A major contribution by the Anglican Church in the life of Indians in South Africa is seen through educational institutions established by Dr. Booth. Christian Missions had taken the initiative of providing education for the indentured immigrants some twenty-five years before the first government schools were opened. From 1884 to 1886 fifteen for boys and six for girls with a total of 2919 Indian children were educated. Booth had established number of schools.

Indians remember the other person Miss Esther Payne Smith, for her dedicated services to the educational upliftment of the underprivileged. An extract from St. Paul's Chronicle – 1960 which speak about those who lived in the Midland of Natal,

"…We Indians owe a great deal to the late Esther Payne Smith, who sacrificed everything to build schools for our people…". (St Paul's Parish, 1894 to 1994: 11)

The other important name in the history of Christian Mission in Natal is Canon Arther Halstead Smith. He had the vision for opening a Training College together with the Boys' School. This vision was fulfilled in 1904. This was the first institution of its kind. He made the church conscious about the future Indian generation who would adopt the English language as medium of education. Though there were still Indians coming to Natal who did not know the English language. Smith said that,

"We must aim at reaching and ministering to both these classes. We shall therefore, continue maintaining services both in English and in Indian languages…". (Govinden, 2002: 84)

Educational institutions continued to be used to share the gospel to the students of all faiths. The Anglican Church and the Church of Scotland were early in the field of

medical missions. Dr. Booth began his medical mission for the growing Indian population in Durban and the surrounding areas in 1883, and this led eventually to the opening of St. Aidan's Mission Hospital. Booth did desire to use this hospital as a way and means of evangelism.

In 1964 the era of Indian Missions came to an end. In 1959 the Venerable Eustace H. Wade, Archdeacon of Durban City and Chairman of the Durban Indian Missions Committee informed the Church about the presence of large numbers of Indians in Natal. He made the plea in his report to the Synod of the Diocese of Natal,

> "...I beg the members of the Synod to regard the work of the Diocese for Indians as of the highest, not a secondary importance…". (Govinden, 2002: 126)

The time had come where the Missions in question were to be passed on to the priest-in-charge of the churches. The Lawrence Commission was appointed to investigate inter alia. The appointment of the Lawrence Commission in 1962 was with reference to the Government -aided Indian schools in the Diocese and their relevance to the Mission work amongst students of other faiths.

"The areas covered by this commission included:

1. The work, staffing, status, boundaries and finances of the congregations of St. Aidan's, Durban: Christ Church, Overport (formerly Sydenham); St. Michael's, Rossburgh; St. Paul's, Pietermaritzburg.
2. All properties held by the Diocesan Trustees or other Diocesan bodies or persons on behalf of these congregations and, in connection with this, to take account of the relevance of the Group Areas Act to them…The first meeting was held on August 1962 and ten further meetings were held in Durban and Pietermaritzburg". (Govinden, 2002: 128-129)

The commission recommended that all four pastoral charges, known as "Missions", should in future be referred to as 'parishes'. When the missions were first established, they were referred to as "Indian", "Native" or "Coloured". These racial tags were, in future, to be deleted. The priests-in-charge were to be known as 'vicars'. (later referred to as 'Rectors').

"In 1964 the list of the parishes in the Diocese of Natal included the following parishes.

1. The Parish of St. Aidans Durban
2. The Parish of Christ Church, Overport, with the chapelry of St. Barnabas, Clare Estate
3. The Parish of Mobeni, which consisted of St. Michael and All Angels, Merebank; St. Gabriel's, Wentworth; the Church of Epiphany, Chatsworth, with the chapelry of St. James', Isipingo Hills.
3. St. Paul's Parish, Pietermaritzburg". (Govinden, 2002: 130)

The Lawrence Commission in 1966 identified the needs of development of various Indian parishes and during 1964-1983 a number of developments took place:

"Tentative plans to extend St. Aidan's church to accommodate its growing congregation were realized in 1969,...in 1965 St. Paul's took over the chapel of Holy Angels which was situated in the rapidly developing 'Indian' area of Northdale, a suburb of Pietermaritzburg….on 16th March 1968 the foundation stone of the Church of Epiphany was laid at Unit 3, Chatsworth and on 5 January 1969 the new Church was dedicated as part of the Parish of Mobeni…in 1972 the Parish of Mobeni was dissolved by authorization of Bishop Inman. Thus independent parish status was granted to the Parish of St. Michael's, the Parish of St. Gabriel's and Church of Epiphany with the chapelry of St. James, in 1981 the latter became a chapel of St. Michael's. Meanwhile Phoenix was developing as the new township for Indians. 1981 saw the beginning of the Church of the Holy

Trinity which was then a chapelry of St. Martin's in Durban North". (Govinden, 2002: 134-135)

5.4 Conclusion

South African Indians from the time of their arrival had to divert their energy towards survival in this country. However, Indians made every attempt to grow and progress and become part of this country and to a great extent the process of such acculturation made a great impact on their culture.

Govinden has aptly drawn the attention to the services of Dr. Booth to the Indian community. A good number of Dr Booth's successors also made every attempt to bring the Gospel of Jesus to Indian people. The dedication of superintendents, assistant priests and lay workers (mostly women) is testified through the establishments of churches, educational institutions and a hospital in Natal. Most of these dedicated workers had a colonial upbringing and were not well aware of other cultures. Therefore there were no concerted efforts made by them to draw an appropriate mission paradigm in dealing with the Indian people who came from a distinct cultural background. Govinden also points out that due to the lack of proper strategy and finances and some lack of interest in Indian people the Anglican Church had lost an opportunity to evangelize Indians effectively.

Govinden, due to the limited scope of his research does not deal in detail with criticisms faced by the Church in South Africa and in India on the issue of conversion of Indians from Hindus and Tamils and also within some quarters of the Church.

Hindus both in India and South Africa challenge conversion of oppressed people into Christianity based on social services of the Church. They call it proselitization and not conversion? There is a great need to understand when does evangelism become proselytism? And when does the legitimate call to repentance and new birth become manipulation to create Church growth for number's sake? The motives of conversion amongst Indian people is a very crucial subject which has to take into account the

complex social order and background from which Indians have come into the Christian faith. This issue will be dealt with in detail in the next chapter.

In the previous chapters Kuper, Brain and Govinden's research has pointed out that Indians brought a different cultural tradition along with them. There is no evidence that Christian converts were encouraged to use Hindu cultural symbols in Christianity. The wearing of the Tali (a nuptial necklace) was replaced with wedding ring at marriages: placing a dot on the forehead, exchanging garlands at weddings etc were not practiced.

Govenden's research is very helpful in understanding the mission of the Anglican Church in Natal. However he does not deal in detail with the caste backgrounds of Indian converts and their historical roots due to the limited scope of his research. It is important to understand why some Indian converts do not want to use Hindu customs and cultural symbols after becoming Christians. It is important for Indian Christians in South Africa to connect with their roots and the emerging Dalit theology in India.

Govinden observes that the missionary workers sent from the "home" country, inadvertently, changed the lifestyles of the new Indian Christian converts who were then criticized by Hindus and Muslims for abandoning the eastern mode of dress in favour of frocks and hats; English spoken at home instead of an Indian language; beef and pork being included in the preparation of Indian dishes. But Govinden has not been able to expand in his research this complex phenomena and causes of change of lifestyle of the converts after accepting the Christian faith. For example, was this change imposed on them or did converts opt for this change in order to formulate a new respectable identity against their old low caste identity in Hinduism? Most of the Indian converts into the Christian faith come from lower or Dalit backgrounds in India. They were not vegetarians. Most of the converts in their old caste structure were used to eating beef and other meat. Abandoning the eastern mode for a western life style had to do with the psychology of the converts who lived in India as untouchable or outcaste and were dehumanized in the caste and class structure of Hinduism. Conversion as an emancipation from an oppressive history opens all sorts of possibilities where people decide to choose

what is best for them. The western lifestyle was one of such choices made by Indian converts.

Govinden has very powerfully brought out in his research the paternalistic attitude of the Superintendents and other workers sent by the SPG. All these workers though made considerable sacrifices in devoting their lives to the upliftment of the growing Anglican Indian community. But they worked within the segregationist policies of the day. The very fact that there was a 'mission to Indians' (as there was to 'African' and Coloureds) meant that such 'missions' were to be regarded as 'outreach' work rather than mainstream 'parish' work. This separation implied that the segregationist view was an accepted unproblematic ally.

Govinden does mention the question raised by James Cochrane who stated that in seeking to transform the structures of society, the question arises as to

> "Why missionaries (and the Church) did their best to inculcate a way of life which bears no necessary relationship to Biblical Christianity. In attempting to explain this view, Peter Hinchcliff writes about such missionaries ' in the last resort…can only be defended on the ground that what one is taking to other parts of the earth is better than what is already there' and he further admits the intimate connection of the missionaries to the (British) Empire…Missionaries presumed the British customs and traditions were superior to those of the indigenous people in a particular colony to which they were sent…What is also being alluded to here is that fundamentally the missionaries displayed a 'pro-Empire' bias that left the political and economic fabric of the Empire intact. They were hesitant to openly contest the imperial enterprise. They saw their work as operating largely in a sacred rather than secular sphere – and unwittingly or not they bolstered up colonial values. Generally and inadvertently, the Biblical message of subservience and humility served to strengthen colonial hegemony". (Govinden, 2002, 139-40)

Due to the limited scope of his research, Govinden did not expand on how the way of life of Indian converts after accepting Jesus Christ could bear the necessary relationship to Biblical Christianity in their life and witness to their own people. And how the Anglican Church could evolve itself in using the background of the converts for creative and energetic mission praxis in South Africa. The complex cultural and social backgrounds of Indian converts should provide a creative and energetic mission praxis to the Church of God for doing their mission effectively.

CHAPTER SIX

The cultural identity of converts

The Motives of Religious conversion and its impact on cultural identity

6.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights the religious conversion motives of the depressed communities in India and its impact on their cultural identity. These communities have lived with a degraded social identity in an oppressive caste culture in Indian society. Conversion into Christianity enabled them to construct a respectable cultural identity in the society. Christianity helped them psychologically to move away from a depressed position into that of a healthy social being. In Christianity these converts experienced a positive characterization of their human identity. Therefore the impact of religious conversion on the cultural identity of converts is seen in their motives of conversion and in their desire to formulate a new respectable social identity.

This chapter looks into the quest of converts and their hope and aspirations. Change amongst human being is a result of crisis events and is a process that takes place in the total time-line of their life on earth. Motives of conversion in the Indian Context and in the context of Africa were rooted in the socio-psychological needs of the people. Lower caste or untouchable status in Hindu society in India and poverty and racial segregation in South Africa had crushed their humanity. A search for a new respectable identity, selfhood, and an appropriate spiritual worldview to restore their humanity had drawn the depressed Indian communities into Christianity. Eventually in the Christian faith they perceived a new sense of purpose and meaning for their lives. Conversion made a great impact on their personal behaviour in relation to the society.

Many Hindu people in India have criticized the motives of converts. They call the conversion motives of depressed communities unworthy on ethical and moral grounds. However this chapter defends the conversion motives both on moral and ethical grounds. In chapter two of this thesis it is pointed out that in Hinduism the law of Karma makes of human life a very individual affair; the Dharma sutras (means 'rules' of justice or code of

law') and all the literature deriving from them are not concerned with theories on ethics. The Dharma sutras are more concerned with the practical code of behaviour as per the birth theory of Hinduism. These Hindu practical codes-of-behaviour have played an important role in the shaping of Indian society.

The Hindu caste system has created an unjust social system for more than 200 million people belonging to depressed communities in India. Since caste status in society was fixed by birth, the only way to remove it was through violating the standards of behaviour laid down by one's caste.

The conversion motives of the depressed community speak about the aspirations of the depressed community to shape their destiny outside the Hindu caste system. This led them to protest against the Hindu caste system. Such protests against a ritualistic Brahamnical Hindu religion had started from 540 B.C. onward through Jainism and Buddhism, followed by the Bhakti Movement in the 14th and 15th century which eventually was taken over by the dominant Hindu class to initiate the Hindu reformed movement in India. For the last 200 years there have been ongoing self-respect movements and religious and social reform movements for educational and political rights in South India.

Mass conversions to non-Hindu religions were the most prominent means of protest against Hinduism by depressed communities in the second half of the 19th century. Many historians as Webster says,

> "The modern Dalit movement was begun in and through the Christian conversion movements". (Webster, 1992, 33ff)

6. 2 Cultural Identity and Conversion

Indian society is segmented by the caste system. Caste is a very complex phenomenon in India. It is difficult to define the caste system and its impact on Indian society. An attempt has been made in chapter two of this thesis to understand caste complexity in

India by enumerating different characteristics applied to different castes. In the Indian social order the existence of non-compromising caste identities of people is quite visible. The upper caste Hindu people could never accommodate lower caste or outcaste people as equal partners in the mainstream of the Hindu social order. Large groups of depressed communities were frustrated by being isolated and excluded from the mainstream of Indian society. Their hopeless circumstances in the Hindu religion forced them to search for a new identity in and through the then existing different religions in India. For the depressed communities Christianity was one of the options (in the face of other religions e.g. Buddhism, Sikhism and Islam) to choose to shape a better human/cultural identity in the Indian society. Therefore conversions in India are mainly the protest of the masses against the negative characterization of their lives through the oppressive caste culture.

This thesis has applied a multi-disciplinary approach (using a wide range of studies from different social sciences) in understanding the impact of religious conversion on the cultural identity of converts in India.

The identity of people is rooted in their birth in a particular racial, ethnic, religious and cultural background. The collective identities of people are inherent in their social life. In Indian society social status is ascribed to people by the Hindu religion on the basis of their birth in a particular caste. However, due to various circumstances in life in the society there are moments when people want to modify or acquire a new identity. The need for a new identity very often has to do with a desire for a new self-hood and it involves the transformation of value systems. In the search for a new identity in the society people want to change their ascribed status and achieve a new status. This kind of identity change generally happens through religious conversion. Religious conversion highlights a radical change in one's life. In chapter one I have pointed out that religious conversion is a broad and complex subject of study. The social scientists are of great help in analysing various factors responsible for religious conversion.

The issue of identity is central to the examination in cultural studies. This examination takes place in the contexts within which and through which both individuals and groups

construct, negotiate and defend their identity or self-understanding. Cultural studies have drawn heavily from those approaches, which have questioned the orthodox account of identity.

The orthodox view sees the human being as a stable self which cannot be influenced by any external factors. In Descartes' writing in the 17th century it was assumed that the self is something autonomous or in other words is independent of all external influences.

However David Hume, a Scottish philosopher, questioned Descartes' view and proffered what was commonly known as the 'bundle theory' of the self. In his view,

> "The self was nothing more than a bundle of sense impressions that continually changed as the individual had new experiences or recalled old one". (Edgar, 1999: 184)

Cultural studies on the identity issue also raised the question as to whether a society was a product of individuals or the individual was a product of the society. Emile Durkheim in the late nineteenth century argued that the individual was a product of the society. Through his study of pre-industrial and industrial society he refuted the idea of homogeneity in the society. He pointed to the distinctive lives and experiences of individuals based upon economic conditions. In his argument he stressed that the individual is a product of the particular culture in which he lives.

In analysing self-identity George Herbert Mead suggested that the self is constructed through its relations with others. The development of the self therefore depends upon the others it encounters. Erving Goffman developed this idea through 'the symbolic interactionist approach' in sociology. An individual in the process of interaction develops capacities to change his or her attitudes and ways of behaving as the people around him or her change. Therefore for Erving,

> "The self is a product of particular interactions…" (Edgar, 1999: 185)

However the psychoanalysts have radically altered the understanding of oneself as a moral being. Erik Erikson coined the phrase 'identity-crisis' in the 1940s and developed 'psychodynamic theory'. He located identity crisis in the life of the one who had lost a sense of 'personal sameness and historical continuity'. Therefore for Erikson identity formation,

> "Is a process between the identity of the individual and the identity of the communal culture...". (Edgar, 1999: 186)

Some social psychologists have used child psychology to analyze the problematic identity of the self in the society. Emphasis in these studies is laid on the contributory factors of the external surroundings in the psychological development of people and its impact on the self and society. Freud, while analyzing the problematic identity of the self in society viewed identity as resting on the child's assimilation of external persons.

But Lacan reinterprets Freud's problematic identity of the self. He believes that self-consciousness emerges only at the mirror stage in an infant - at approximately six to eighteen months. During this period an infant recognises its reflection as a reflection of itself and comes to know itself, not directly but through the mirror image. Lacan pursues his argument that the self emerges as the promise of control in the face of fragmentation when the child is separated from its mother, and as much as the child's identity depends upon that of the mother, but the child enters language through the imposition of the law by the father, with the 'no' that prohibits incest with the mother. The child desires the mother in order to regain a primal unity. This is a desire to disobey the father's prohibition, and yet it must be repressed. Therefore, Lacan argues,

> "The unconscious is structured like language. In effect, this is to argue that the self (or more properly the subject) is positioned by language, which is to say that it is always repressing its own lack of unity". (Edgar, 1999: 186)

Althusser (who developed the concept of 'ideological state apparatus') in his structuralist version of Marxism offers a parallel account of the self or subject, albeit a product of ideology. He suggests,

> "Social institutions such as the church, education, police, family and mass media 'interpellet' or hail the subject, again positioning him or her within society". (Edgar, 1999: 186)

The work of Foucault can be interpreted through the centrality of the question of identity. He analyses how madness is conceived in different ages. He compares the renaissance view of madness as its own form of reason with the rationalist seventeenth-century's exclusion of the insane from the society. Foucault points out through this study,

> "That madness is socially constructed and specific, and historically variable social practices exist to constrain it". (Edgar, 1999: 186)

The work of Lacan, Althusser and Foucault are linked to identity politics. They have pointed out that the identity of the dominant in the society depends upon its construction of its own 'others'. They recognize that identity is not merely constructed but depends upon others. And this recognition,

> "Opens up the theoretical space for marginal or oppressed groups to challenge or renegotiate the identities that have been forced upon them in the process of domination". (Edgar, 1999: 187)

In India the growing dominant Vedic ritualism and gnosis (supremacy of the Brahmans) met the popular discontent in dissident in heterodox movements (these movements are now well developed religions) called Jainism (540-468 B.C.) and Buddhism (563-483 B.C.). There had been ongoing anti-caste movements among the depressed communities. The medieval Bhakti movement (a socio-religious expression) represented the aspirations

of the depressed communities against the dominant Hindu philosophy where Brahmans (the upper castes) are considered to be twice born.

The persistent identity of many Indians as lower caste and outcaste communities was based on ascribed characteristics. They suffered discrimination and exclusion in Hinduism. They lived and were viewed as subhuman and were denigrated as vermin. They were subjected to gross human rights violations. This extreme disparity between upper caste and lower caste and outcaste people was justified in Hindu philosophy as morality - doing one's duty as per one's birth in a particular caste. The depressed communities were the victims of oppression and domination committed by the dominant upper caste in India. It is in this social set up that the depressed community began to claim their selfhood after their conversion into the Christian faith.

6. 3 Understanding the Culture of the Depressed Community in India

In India the upper caste Hindus had constructed others as lower caste in order to maintain their dominant upper caste identity. The upper caste identity depended on the construction of the lower caste identity in the Indian society. Christianity had offered the masses from the lower castes an opportunity to challenge the upper caste communities by renegotiating their lower caste identity. They renegotiated their identity by rejecting the Hindu caste system and accepting the Christian faith.

In the Indian context the culture of converts has to be viewed through the caste system. Their social legacy as lower or untouchable groups and their personality as a group emerged in and through the man-made environment in India. Their total society heredity, traditions, and life were governed through the dominant Hindu upper caste community. The lower caste masses are identified psychologically as a depressed people and socially as an oppressed community.

Larbeer in his study on Baba Ambedkar describes Caste as a rigid social system in India,

"In which social hierarchy is maintained historically, generation after generation, and it does not allow any mobility out of the space in which a person is born". (Larbeer, 2003, 10)

The majority of Christian converts in India and South Africa come from lower caste, outcaste and untouchable status in the Indian society.

The origins of caste and untouchability are obscure and there is disagreement among scholars. However India,

"Has four distinct infra-cultures on which stand about 40 major cultures and 1200 subcultures". (Raj, 1986, 39)

Therefore, when the Christian untouchable or the Christian Mongol tribal is accused of drifting away from the Indian culture, the question is asked, what exactly is meant by "Indian Culture"? It is wrongly presumed to be the Sanskrit (Aryan) culture.

According to Ambedkar who is called the father of the Indian constitution and who belonged to the lower caste in Hindu society, in India,

"The problem of caste discrimination is linked with facets of Hindu culture". (Larbeer, 2003, 187)

In the 19th century Alexander Duff who had extensively traveled and interacted with Indian culture called the caste system,

"The cement, which held Hindu Society together". (Pirouet, 1989, 60)

He was of the opinion that if the caste system were destroyed, the Hindu religion would be brought to an end.

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Since the conversion story of Indian converts into Christianity is rooted in the caste system of India, it is imperative to understand the concept of caste in the Hindu religion. This will help in understanding the impact of conversion on the cultural identity of Indian converts.

P. Mohan Larbeer in his study on Ambedkar's view of Hinduism records the following definitions on untouchability by some key leaders in the Indian community. (Larbeer, 2003, 27)

> According to B. Ambedkar; "Untouchability is the notion of defilement, pollution, contamination and the ways and means of getting rid of that defilement. It is a case of a permanent, hereditary stain, which nothing can cleanse".

> According to Gandhi; "Untouchability means pollution by the touch of certain persons by reason of their birth in a particular state of a family."

> The committee on untouchability, headed by Elayaperumal said; "Untouchability is not a separate institution by itself; it is a corollary of the institutions of the caste system of Hindu society. It is an attitude on the part of a whole group of people. It is spirit of social aggression that underlines this attitude."

> Parvathama; "Untouchability is part and parcel of Hindu religion and caste system."

> Justice Nasirullah Beg; "The evil of untouchability is not a separate institution by itself. It is a corollary of the institution of the caste system, warp and woof of Hindu society."

> P.R. Thakur; "Untouchability is nothing but the symptom of the disease, namely, the caste system. It exists as a matter of the caste system."

R.K. Shirsagar, traces the development of untouchability in the categories: Pre-Manusmriti period, Manusmriti period, Post Manusmriti period and medieval period.

Kooiman looks at caste from the bottom up, and finds caste not as a system which encourages interdependency,

> "But of economic exploitation. Intermediate viewpoints argue that the stigma of pollution and the material deprivation of the untouchable poor, reinforce one another". (Kooiman, 1989: 3)

Aryans had forcefully embedded the life of depressed people in India in an oppressive Hindu culture. The depressed communities, mainly Pariah or untouchables, in India are,

> "An ancient people, perhaps even the aboriginal or original inhabitants of South India… a culturally distinct community with the drum as a key symbol of this particularity… an oppressed community, primarily because their particular heritage was not in conformity with the tradition of the Hindu caste communities". (Clark, 1999, 70-71)

Christianity has challenged Hindu culture. Sunder Raj aptly points out that,

> "The most significant Christian contribution, culturally, in the 19th century was: the conscientising and organizing against Sati, infanticide, untouchability and slavery". (Raj, 1986, 40).

6. 4 Identity and Self Respect

Identity is always defined over against 'the other'. Robert J Schreiter in his book Constructing Local Theologies points out the importance of listening to culture. Listening according to him will help to prevent the presumption that culture is an unchanging and static reality. While discussing the tools for listening to culture one of the approaches he suggests is

"Culture must be able to address the forces that shape identity in culture". (Schreiter, 1985, 43)

He raises the following two questions, which could ideally construct local theologies.

"What makes us who we are, and how do we get that way". (Schreiter, 1985, 43)

And by raising the above question he points out the distinctiveness, bonds of commonality factors that enable sustainability and constitute key categories to listen for in a culture. Shreiter considers that these categories often center around two considerations:

"Group-boundary formation and worldview formation: In the first instance, identity is formed by marking the boundaries of the group (a "we" vs. a "they"). Trans-cultural psychologists have pointed out that this may be one of the most universally present categories in human culture. Within those boundaries, once they have been set up, questions of differentiation begin…". (Schreiter, 1985, 44)

Though Shreiter's investigation is a synthetic one he raises an important issue about

"How is a community to go about bringing to expression its own experience of Christ in its concrete situation?". (Schreiter, 1985, xi)

The religious conversion of depressed communities in India is a rich type of identity experience over against their lower caste and outcaste or untouchable identity in Hinduism. Conversion to Christianity provided them an ideology, purpose and a new socio-spiritual worldview. Their self-respect was restored. Now Indian Converts assert Christian Identity against Hindu identity.

6. 5 Motives of Conversion in South Africa and India

It is not wrong to say that the conversion motives of the masses in India and South Africa are realized in their secular need for an upward social and economic mobility in the society. Dalit theologians, for example James Massey, A.P. Nirmal and M.E. Prabhakar, consider that for depressed communities conversion to the Christian faith was a counter-cultural movement and an escape route.

Material help, availability of jobs and housing, medical care and education were major factors that attracted people from the economically lower class, outcaste and untouchable backgrounds both in India and South Africa to accept the Christian faith. The social change that was expected of the outcaste was in general congruent with his or her own aspiration.

In South Africa the medical services and educational institutions were major factors in the conversion of indentured Indian people into Christianity. The baptism records of St Aidan, Christ Church Addington, and St. Cyprians in Durban, reveal that most of the converts into the Anglican Church came from farming, agricultural worker or servant backgrounds. A few converts were schoolmasters, cooks, waiters, storekeepers, tailors and interpreters.

In general, both in India and South Africa, the communities that embraced Christianity were from poor, lower caste, outcaste or untouchable backgrounds. All these people decided to flee from poverty, social degradation and exploitation in search for a new identity, self-respect and a new socio-spiritual worldview.

In South Africa the Hindu register shows the large losses of their members to either Christianity or heterodox groups. One in every four in South Africa became a Christian.

> "Christianity gained over 90 percent of Hindus who had changed their religious tradition…from the Telugu, Tamil, Hindi and non-sectarian groups". (Oosthuizen, s.a. 45)

The Tamil and Telugu in Durban as per the baptismal records are found to be more susceptible to conversion. In income terms the Tamil and Telugu are last in comparison to Gujarati and Hindi people in South Africa, because most of the indentured labourers came from Tamil and Telugu background and Gujarati speaking Muslims and Hindus entered in South Africa as passenger Indians who came to do business in the country. However as discussed in Chapter four Hilda Kuper in her research had located the emergence of ex-indentured elite in business and professional circles today and about 25% of the wealthiest businessmen in South Africa are Tamil, Telugu and Hindi Speaking Hindus from the indentured class.

Fatima Meer, observes,

> "Christian conversions were confined almost entirely to indentured Indians whose uprooting from India was in many respects deeply disruptive and who as a result showed serious signs of social disintegration in Natal, particularly in the early days". (Meer, 1969, 213)

In chapter two of this thesis the background of the South African indentured Indians is discussed at length. They come from a very complex and dehumanizing socio-religious, political and economic background in India. However for the indentured Indians there was no respite from the suffering and dehumanization in South Africa. In the previous chapters it is noted that poverty, illiteracy, low standard of living and lack of medical facilities among the indentured labourers in Natal had shocked Dr. Booth. He dedicated a long period of his life to serving and caring for the poor indentured Indians. He worked towards socio-religious and economic upliftment of the Indian indentured population in Natal.

The following is an extract from a Socio-Religious Survey of Chatsworth in Durban, conducted by Oosthuizen and Hofmeyr. This throws an interesting light on the motives of conversion of Indians in South Africa. (Oasthuizen, s.a. 47-48)

Reasons for Conversion to Christianity

Reasons	Number of People
Christian prayer has a healing power	15
Parents changed	11
Faith led to other forms of material help e.g. job, house etc.	10
For the sake of love	8
Found the truth, right way etc.	7
Hinduism was too complicated	6
Other	7
No reason given	2

Oasthuizen explains the most interesting feature in this table the number it shows as having changed because of what they experienced as the direct material efficacy of Christianity is quite large. Of the 66 conversions, 25 were as a result of the perceived power of Christianity to heal disease or provide other forms of material help. Indirectly the proportion is greater since many of those who changed with their parents, had parents who changed for material reasons.

In comparison with India, Hindu casteism is not so rigidly maintained in South Africa. But it would be wrong to say that no residual caste elements are seen amongst South African Indian Hindus. Hofmeyr in the study of Indians in Natal found a residual caste element among different Indian groups. He identified the presence of caste division such as,

> "The 'Singh' group, or those in the 'other' group who identified themselves as 'Brahmins'" (Hofmeyr, 1981, 3)

I wanted to have first hand information from Indian people to verify if residual casteism is still prevalent in South Africa. In my meetings with people of different faiths and my

discussions on caste factors in South Africa among Indians with over twenty key members from the parishes, members of the Hindu Gujarati Community, of the Tamil Community, followers of Saivism and followers of Satya Sai Baba and Brahmankumaris both in Lenasia and Durban, I have learnt of the following aspects of caste or class and food restriction on the basis of traditional Hindu religious understanding among the Indian community in South Africa:

1). There is a clear divide between the Tamil and Gujarati communities in Lenasia, Johannesburg and Chatsworth, in Durban.

2). Cyril our Churchwarden says that his neighbours are from a Gujarati background. However to this day, although they have known one another and met quite often for many years, his Gujarati neighbour has never shared meal with them.

3). The interfaith ministry of our parish has drawn Hindu and Tamil people together at various occasions. There was a visible divide and tension. My friend Dinky Pillay from a Tamil background says Saivism is not an appendage of Hinduism.

4). Brahman customs and rules of life amongst the Gujarati community in Lenasia are still very rigid. My Brahman Priest friend says that every month once in a week he has to cook food himself as his wife during her menstruation period cannot touch any utensil or enter into the kitchen. This is based upon a pollution theory.

5). Friends from Brahmakumaris strictly observe Food restrictions. We can only offer them fruits.

6). Cyril our Church Warden comes from a Telugu background. He says his parents never discussed with them their caste background. They would have known it but they would have been ashamed to talk about it. Moreover, he says, we became Christian and there is no caste in Christianity.

7). My friend Dr. Hemant Vallabh, a Gujarati person, speaks about caste consciousness among Gujarati people, particularly when it comes to marriages. There are very few Brahmans and Kshatriyas among the Gujarati community in Lenasia. However the existing business Gujarati class is quite particular in keeping their upper caste/class identity. This community considers Tamils as lower caste and attributes their conversion to Christianity to their ignorance about their own Hindu culture and heritage. A good

number of enlightened people are joining the Satya Sai Baba fellowships. In this fellowship Hemant says that there is no caste consciousness as Tamils and Hindus and a few Gujarati people are the followers of Satya Sai Baba.

But in comparison to India the South African Indian community does not practice casteism so rigidly.

The Newspaper Post for the 12th March 2003 writes about what Pat Poovelingum has to say about Hindu conversion to Christianity,

> "It is true that Hindus are being converted not only to Christianity but also to Islam. And that has been happening in India and elsewhere for the past six hundred years. The major cause has been the disgusting caste discrimination that was and remains part of Hindu culture. While this evil has largely been eradicated in South Africa, residuals remain…". (Soobrayan, 2003, 13)

For Indian converts from depressed communities, conversion was a way forward for a new and a better future. The new future for them had to do with the discovery of a new social structure, which could provide them a new identity, self-respect and a new socio-spiritual worldview.

The motives of conversion for Indian converts can be understood as their need for a new respectable identity and an appropriate socio-spiritual worldview in which their generation could grow with dignity.

However it is important to note that the depressed people took this route as per their own choice and accepted western culture as a new respectable identity over against their old caste identity in Hinduism.

6. 6 Unworthy-Motives of Converts

Unworthy motives refers to people who converted into Christian faith for material gain. The allegation that has surfaced against the Church is for proselytization of people who came into Christianity not for spiritual reasons but for social and secular benefits. Not only Hindus but also some missionaries were reluctant to support these conversions. They criticized conversion of people into Christianity as conversion with unworthy motives. Pickett who researched mass movements in India records,

> "Many critics of mass movements, East and West, both Christians and non-Christians, appear to believe that unworthy motives predominate in making the masses therein move to profession of Christian faith, and also in making ministers receive them into their churches". (Pickett, 1969, 152)

There was the missionaries' reluctance to have the ranks of the Church flooded with people lacking proper spiritual motives.

> In Western lands opponents of foreign missions "have often raised the cry 'rice Christians', thereby impugning the motives that have made poor people, especially in India and China, call themselves Christians". (Pickett, 1969, 152)

A missionary expressed the opinion that the motivation of mass movements had not been above criticism;
> "…The preaching of the gospel often awakens in the mind of the receptive hearer a desire for self-improvement and a fuller, as well as a better life, appreciation of kindness shown to him, hope of escape from century-old wrongs previously endured without question, and ambition for his children". (Picket, 1969, 154)

Mahatma Gandhi considered motives of conversion of Indians entirely secular and mostly unworthy. A less prominent Hindu leader gives the following three entirely unworthy motives of conversions of Indian people from lower castes.

1. "They want to be treated like respectable people, and only the missionaries and a few foolish Indian Christians will treat them that way.
2. They want to quit doing sweepers' work or, at least, to find other work for their children.
3. They want the help of the missionary when their landlords or the police complain against them and Christian officials have to decide their cases". (Pickett, 1969, 153)

Many Hindus both in India and South Africa have raised their voices against conversion. They consider conversion an unholy business of the Church and some call it a human rights violation. They say that every Christian activity in India is dollar-directed.

"…Every soul that embraces the Christian faith is snared in by money. The foreign funded Christian institutions are conversion shops in camouflage. But for the overseas monetary crutches, Christianity in India will crumble down". (Raj, 1986, 4)

There is a growing tension about the conversion of Hindu and Tamil people into Christianity in Durban. Thillayvel Naidoo in Durban writes that,

"Pastors and Others who go around enticing Hindus to convert, do so to the culturally weak and defenseless Hindus. They don't approach the religiously strong members of the community. They don't approach Hindu temples and organizations, such the SA Hindu Maha sabha". (Soobrayan, 2003,14)

Does Pillay from the World Saiva Council in South Africa speaks about an incident where a mother after converting to the Christian faith refused to give a decent burial to her daughter who was still not Christian.

In Chatsworth Durban Hindus are alleging forced conversion of their ignorant and misguided Hindu families. A call to defend Hinduism is made to its followers. They remind the masses that Hindus are not made but they are born.

6. 7 Conversion Motives not unworthy

The allegation by Hindus and some people from the Christian religion that the conversion motives of the depressed communities were unworthy raise ethical and moral issues. Ethics is a complicated subject because our morality is an odd mixture of received tradition and personal opinion. People are a product of their social and cultural environment.

Conversion in this thesis is attributed to the desires of the people from depressed communities who wanted to escape from their lower and untouchable caste status in the Hindu society. The motives of conversion were both out of inclination (to be liberated) and out of duty (to secure a better social status for their generations). These converts had knowledge of the fixed caste status and its concomitant effect in their daily living and future life in the Hindu society.

I am arguing that the motives of conversion were not unworthy. I am arguing that the Church and the depressed communities in India were faced with a moral and an ethical question to emancipate depressed communities from the imposed oppressive caste system. For the Church it was imperative to follow the gospel mandate to participate in the liberation movement of oppressed communities in India and for the depressed communities it was an opportune moment to exercise their moral obligation to free themselves and their future generations from the perpetual dehumanization in the Hindu caste system.

Conversion to Christianity for many depressed communities in India was morally a deliberative conclusion – a conclusion based on their social and economic situation in the Indian society. In this morally deliberative action many untouchable and lower caste depressed communities had to challenge the Hindu birth theory in which it was ascribed

that the lower castes had a moral obligation to serve the upper caste. They found Christianity very helpful in helping them to be liberated from the oppressive moral obligations demanded by Hindu caste system.

> "In the morality system, moral obligation is expressed in one especially important kind of deliberative conclusion – a conclusion that is directed towards what to do, Governed by moral reasons, and concerned with a particular situation". (Williams, 1985, 175)

In order to understand the moral and ethical imperatives related to the conversion story of Indian converts, it will be important to connect with theories that extend the empirical method of the physical sciences to society.

Socrates in his query raised the basic question of life, asking, "How one should live? Plato thought that philosophy could answer this question and so like Socrates he hoped that one could direct one's life, and if necessary redirect it. Though it is difficult to conclude that the moral philosophy can answer Socrates' question, attempts are made progressively to respond and answer to this basic question of life 'How one should live'?

After Plato there were treatises on this subject and Aristotle's Ethics is one of the most illuminating. However some philosophers would like to go back now to Socrates' position reflectively questioning common sense and moral and ethical concerns without being burdened by the weight of texts and a tradition of philosophical studies.

It was in the medieval European thought the epistemological authority was the word of God through the teachings of the Roman Church. The modification of this epistemology during Renaissance was radical one but the Church maintained its authority. A shift from a view of God as creator of nature to a view of him as expressed in it gave importance to natural law and the power of reason. This shift eventually produced a shift from reliance on faith to a reliance on reason and experience. Now more attention and thought were directed to the methods suitable to understanding physical phenomena. There was a

growing direct challenge to ecclesiastical authority, in social, political and moral matters as much as in intellectual ones.

It is during this period in the 18th century that theories were proposed which attempted to extend the empirical method of the physical sciences to society. France and Ireland showed an interest in furnishing

> "A natural account not merely of the individual, his status and his relation with the state, but also of the society in which, he acquired that status and was able to maintain those relations". (Hawthorn, 1976, 13)

It is Rousseau and his contemporary Kant who took Rousseau seriously and saw that

> "The one science man really needs is the one I teach, of how to occupy properly that place in creation that is assigned to man and how to learn from it what one must be in order to be man". (Howthorn, 1976, 28)

Rousseau argued in his discourse *Emile* and *The Social Contract,* that

> "Man did nevertheless have an inviolable moral sense and that if he were to use it, freeing himself of the contingent contaminations of his social experience, he would be able to discern the correct law". (Hawthorn, 1976, 28)

Kant took the second argument of Rousseau seriously emphasizing man's need to discern the 'correct law' to free himself from contingent contaminations of his social experience.

Kant established the supreme principle of morality through formulating metaphysic of morals starting with the provisional assumption that our moral ordinary judgments may legitimately claim to be true. There may be questions regarding the application of this principle although he occasionally gives illustrations of the way in which such

application may be made. However whether Kant has succeeded or failed in establishing the supreme principle of morality, his concluding note about the practical point of his understanding of one's duty is relevant. He says,

> "It is absurd to ask why we should do our duty (or obey the categorical imperative) and to expect the answer that we should do so because of *something else*- some interest or satisfaction of our own in this world or the next. If such an answer could be given, it would mean that no imperatives were categorical and that duty is mere illusion". (Paton, 1948, 49)

The ancient Greek philosophy was divided into three sciences called physics, ethics and logic.

> "Logic is formal… and since it borrows nothing from our sensuous experience it must be regarded as a wholly non-empirical or a priori science… unlike logic both physics and ethics must have an empirical part (one based on sensuous experience) as well as a non-empirical or a priori part (one not so based); for physical laws must apply to nature as an object of experience, and ethical laws must apply to human wills as affected by desires and instincts which can be known only by experience". (Paton, 1948, 13)

If we take physics in a wide sense as the philosophy of nature, it appears to proceed in accordance with certain principles. Kant regards the task of formulating and if possible justifying these principles as an *a priori* or pure part of physics or as the 'metaphysics of nature'.

> "Among these principles he includes, for example, the principle that every event has a cause and this can never be proved (though it may be confirmed) by experience". (Paton, 14, 1948)

If we accept that there is a moral "ought" or moral "duty" and that there are moral principles in accordance with which men ought to act: Kant observes,

> "*a priori* or pure ethics is concerned with the formulation and justification of moral principles – with such terms as 'duty', 'good' and 'evil', 'right' and 'wrong'. This a priori part of ethics may be called a metaphysic of morals… for detailed knowledge of particular human duties we require experience of human nature (and indeed of many other things). This belongs to the empirical part of ethics and is called by Kant 'practical anthropology'". (Paton, 14, 1948)

Kant in his first proposition while dealing with the motives of duty points out that

> "A human action is morally good, not because it is done from immediate inclination – still less because it is done from self-interest – but because it is done for the sake of duty". (Paton, 1948, 19)

Kant holds that

> "We have at least an indirect duty to seek our own happiness". (Paton, 1948, 20)

Kant in his second proposition while dealing with the formal principle of duty points out,

> "An action done from duty has its moral worth, not from the results it attains or seeks to attain, but from a formal principle or maxim - the principle of doing one's duty whatever that may be". (Paton, 1948, 20)

For Kant maxim is a purely personal and subjective principle on which a rational agent (or subject of action) acts.

Kant in his third proposition while dealing with reverence and law points out that

"Duty is the necessity to act out of reverence for the law". (Paton, 1948, 21)

Though it is difficult to follow Kant's argument he appears to hold that if the maxim of a morally good action is a formal maxim, it must be a maxim of acting reasonably and that is, of acting on a law valid for all rational beings independently of their particular desires.

While dealing with ethical issues one has to be aware that human cultures differ from one another. The presuppositions of the Hebrew-Christian moral tradition about the nature of human beings and its prescriptions for human conduct can differ from Hindu prescriptions about human conduct. Mostly all Hindu prescriptions about human conduct are a matter of caste – the caste into which the agent is born. Arthur Danto in his article 'Basic Actions' mentions,

> "Nothing in India ever was worked out that would serve as a general ethic overreach the differences between castes, treating men, as it were, as equals in some ways". (Donagan, 1977: 33)

Vasudha Narayanan in his article on Hindu Ethics and Dharama writes,

> "Although scholars have, in general assumed that the word "religion" is a suitable term to describe the Hindu tradition, it is commonly agreed that there is no category in Hindu thought and literature which is an exact fit for 'ethics'. (Martin, 2001, 177)

This does not mean that Hindus did not know about ethics or they were immoral.

> "It is simply that there is no discipline in Indian thought directly congruent with 'ethics', just as there is no Western area of which matches the Hindu category of 'Dharma'. Many articles and books have been written on Hindu ethics, but by and large they deal with selected aspects of what Hindus call 'dharma'."(Martin, 2001, 177)

Conversion in India and South Africa must be understood from the perspective of the oppressed masses in the Hindu caste system. They were faced with the question; how long they were to live under the perpetual dehumanization of the Hindu caste system? Conversion was a conscientious decision of the converts. It was neither forced nor had converts any confusion about their decision. The converts were clear about their hope for a good future in the Christian faith. It was an intentional move. From the converts' point of view these motives in the given circumstances were not unworthy but a necessity to escape from the evils of caste system.

In accepting these communities the Church was neither coercive nor involved in an unholy business. The church was morally and ethically obliged by the teachings in the gospel of Jesus to save people from injustices and liberate them from oppression.

"Hindus are born not made" is a true statement. The Hindu creation story discussed in detail in chapter two of this thesis has highlighted that a Hindu belonging to the upper caste is twice born. But there are millions of people in India who are untouchable and are made non-entities in the society by the caste system. Birth in a particular caste decides a person's role and place in the community. The identity of a person in the society depends on his/her birth in a particular caste. Even children's names are given as per their birth in a particular caste as per the Hindu Law.

The Hindu Code of Law called Manusmriti, which provided each caste with an identity, legitimized the contempt for and humiliation of the lower caste and the untouchables. In Manusmriti it is said by Manu,

> "Give a name to a Brahman which invokes in others the idea of reverence and respect: give a name to a Kshatriya which invokes in others velour and courage: give name to a Vaishya which invokes in others the idea of wealth and prosperity: give a name to a Sudra which invokes in others the idea of contempt and humiliation". (Jayakumar, 1999, 226)

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The upper caste Brahmin names reflect the academic achievements of their forefathers; e.g. 'Sastri' (one who has studied Sastras), 'Dwivedi' (one who has studied two Vedas), 'Trivedi' (one who has studied three Vedas), 'Chaturvedi' (one who has studies four Vedas). Other upper-caste Brahmin names include 'Pathak', 'Acharya', 'Upadhyaya' and 'Pandit'. For the Brahmin sub-caste, ancestral village names, ancestral professions and dwelling areas become their sub-caste name. For example, among Telugu Brahmins 'Niogi' (means 'minister to ancestral Kings'), 'Vaideeki' (means 'one who follow the profession of religious teaching').

The Royal class and Warrior caste called Rajput, and many Sikh people, identify themselves with the last name 'Singh' or 'Sinh'.

Other occupational names among Hindu Telugu include, 'Iyer', 'Iyengar', 'Nair', 'Naido', 'Reddy' and 'Gowda' (all these names are related to Landowners).

Caste names are not really family names. For example; 'Gandhi' and 'Patel' are business class people (grocers). A few exogamous divisions within caste are based on the deity worshiped by the family; for example 'Tamma' (within the Reddy caste).

Out caste or Low caste people in India are known by different names such as 'Harijan' (children of God – given by Gandhiji), 'Avarrias' (meaning casteless), 'Panchama' (fifth caste), 'Chandalas' (meaning worst of the earth), 'Depressed classes' (given during British Colonial days), 'Scheduled Caste' (given by the Indian constitution) and the recent Dalit protest movements in India have increasingly used the term 'Dalit' to demonstrate the rejection of derogatory names given to out-caste and lower-caste communities in the Indian society.

The second generation of converts started giving English and Biblical names to their children, because the old names were disgraceful. The new names provided them a new respectable identity. Even the names of their villages were changed into Biblical names as they continued to submit voluntarily to Christianization. The villages known as 'Masih

Garh' (Christ's place), 'Padreee Khera' (Christian Priest Village) and Martin Pur (Village of St. Martin) in India are examples of the expressions of the formation of a new cultural identity of the converts.

The caste system is not mutable in India. The father of the Indian constitution, Dr. Bhimarao Ambedkar, who belonged to the lower caste said,

> "Indian society is a gradation of castes forming an ascending scale of reverence and a descending scale of contempt". (Larbeer, 2003, 187-188)

Dr. Bhimarav Ambedkar in spite of being the father of the Indian Constitution highly educated and an elite politician could never get rid of the humiliation attached to his lower caste identity and status in Hindu society. He said,

> "If you have to get rid of this shameful condition, if you have to cleanse this filth and make use of this precious life, there is only one way and that is to throw off the shackles of the Hindu religion and the Hindu society in which you are bound". (Singh, 1985, 114)

A search for emancipation from the caste system was already going on in Indian society. Self-respect movements initiated by educated people in South India had raised high the spirit of rebellion against Hinduism. Religions, for example Christianity and Islam, and other religions which came into existence in protest against ritualistic Hinduism in India, for example Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism, offered people an opportunity to move away from the caste-ridden Hindu religion. The masses began to escape from Hinduism to embrace a new respectable identity in other existing religions.

Very often Hindu thinkers and philosophers make the argument that missionaries should have helped the poor Indians without inviting them for conversion. However they fail to highlight that conversion in India was not simply based on the monetary or economic needs of the depressed community.

The masses had socio-psychological and socio-spiritual needs. They needed freedom from their stigma as low castes and untouchables in the society. They needed emancipation from perpetual dehumanization in the Hindu caste system based on birth (Creation) theory.

Charity and development projects are common methods that religions have historically used to uplift underprivileged communities. The church happens to be one such religious institution.

However, the Church gave them equality and helped them to gain a respectable identity apart from monetary help. Raj in defense of the conversions of Indians in Christianity says that,

> "Among the untouchable slaves of India who are non-Aryan by race and non-Brahminical by religion, some chose, from the first century onwards, Christianity for (a) regaining their lost human dignity and (b) deliverance from socio-economic slavery. While you may call these "non-spiritual" motives, you dare not call these "ulterior" motives". (Raj, 1986, 84)

The depressed community was longing for a new socio-spiritual world-view. They needed a casteless socio-spiritual structure to live and grow with other people as equal human beings. The Hindu caste system had failed to provide them with an equal status in the society. Rather Hinduism had created social disability for them.

Historic degradation and an unending social disability through caste stigma duly sanctioned by Hinduism were unbearable. Caste and racial discrimination were perpetually effective for generations to come. This dilemma had left them no alternative but to look for some other socio-spiritual worldview. They looked for a socio-spiritual worldview which could restore their humanity. They were in search of a respectable identity and a hope for a better future in all spheres of life. Christianity offered this possibility.

If a social system is governed and justified by a religious philosophy to create social disability for people, people have the right to react and reject such a system. They have the right to disassociate from such a religion which creates disabilities for them. They have the right to look for a system of faith, which can help them to grow. Mass conversion was a social and spiritual protest against Hinduism.

To the depressed community of India Christianity offered an opportunity for a better future and a respectable life in the society. The Christian religion met both the social and the secular needs of the converts. Christianity also offered a better spiritual worldview to the converts as it removed the caste stigma from their life. The Christian spiritual worldview gave them equal status in the society. To a very great extent their hopes and aspirations and their quest for a better future were fulfilled in Christianity. A search for a better life cannot be considered an unworthy motive.

In the 1890s N.G. Chandevarkar, a prominent Brahman reformer of western India, referring to the Christian origin of the Indian social reform movement confessed,

> "It is, I know, the fashion in some quarters to cry down the missionary. If today there is an awakening among us on the subject of society: that is a great deal due to the light brought by him". (Raj, 1986, 31)

Why should the hope of the people for upward mobility be considered unworthy? Villa-Vincencio describes the role of religion in supporting the growth of people.

> "Religion helps to give society the faith, the vision, the *telos* it needs to move forward". (Vincencio, 1992, 11)

However, the Hindu religion failed to recognize the socio-spiritual needs of the masses.

Robert Caldwell, the leading guide of the 1841 Tirunelveli Nadar movement and historian of the Tirunelveli Church, after decades of experience reacted in a seemingly cynical way. He wrote in dealing with converts in India,

"Asking catechumens for their motives in this context was a 'waste of time', since women and children followed the head of the family and the men were too unlettered to articulate their innermost feelings". (Grafe,1990, 93)

He did not question the importance of motivation. His concern was a principle of importance of missionary policy, namely never to reject receiving those people into Christian instruction because of 'unworthy' worldly motives on their part. Against that background he submits his own explanation of the movement: the desire for protection from opposition; a chance of getting wrongs redressed; the benefit of becoming members of a rising community.

In the same vein his fellow missionary Pettit raises the rhetorical question…

"If a person…perceives that Christianity is a system of justice, protection, and peace, and if this feature of its character be to the dark mind of a heathen more evident and attractive than its spiritual excellence and advantage, is the missionary to repel them, or refuse to receive them under instruction until they have derived that clearer knowledge of those purer motives, which, under ordinary circumstances, only a course of spiritual instruction can produce". (Grafe, 1990, 93-94)

There were missionaries who wanted to treat Indian converts as their own family. Bevile Browne from St. Aidan's mission in Natal narrates the stories of children (who were studying in mission schools) in his book "Mangoes and Mealies". His intention of writing these ordinary stories of Indian children was to draw these marginal people into a fellowship of western believers of the Christian faith. He says,

"I have written this book for two sets of people: First of all, for British boys and girls who are living at home… and secondly, I have written for British boys and girls who live in countries like India and Africa, where you see every day lots of black and brown children. Some of these are your brothers and sisters already, because they have been made God's children in Baptism, just as you have been". (Brown, 1910, 90-91)

The profound teachings of Jesus encourage equality amongst human beings, respect and dignity for marginal and a preferential option for the poor. This makes the gospel of Jesus unique in the world and particularly in the Indian and the South African contexts.

For Banerjee who was converted to Christianity from an upper-caste Brahman family,

"Christian conversion, truly speaking, is the remaking of man". (Banerjee, 1982, 14)

It is evident that Indians, after converting to Christianity, have developed self-respect in the society both in India and in South Africa. They have stood firm in their allegiance to Jesus Christ through many difficult circumstances.

In view of the need of restoration of the masses from an oppressive system it is important to affirm that the Church in the Indian and South African contexts was morally obliged by the teachings of Jesus to begin the difficult task of saying 'yes' to the conversion of the masses. The Church was ethically obliged to create a casteless and kinder social order for converts. The Church continued to remain under obligation to work towards building an all-inclusive (non-caste and non-class and non-racial) community for all those who are marginal in the society.

Jesus ceaselessly invites all who are burdened and who need rest in him. The teachings of Jesus in the gospels continue to demand even today a thoughtful and creative 'yes' from the Church to create an all inclusive (non-caste, non-class and non-racial) Anglican Christian community in South Africa.

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6. 8 The Impact of Religious Conversion on the Cultural Identity of Indian converts

Religious conversion involves a transformation of opinion from one belief to another. It also involves significant life changes. Religion plays an important role in the life and growth of people. It has been one of the tools people have used as an agent of bondage or liberation.

India has been a cradle of religions. Many religions found the Indian soil fertile and have flourished. The religions which have made impact in Indian society are Christianity and Islam (which came from outside) and Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism (born in India).

The emphasis in this thesis is on the way conversion decisions are made by depressed communities in India. Social and economic factors have influenced the conversion decisions of depressed communities.

I have also emphasised that the Hindu caste system had a deep negative psychological impact on the depressed communities. They had a deep aspiration for an egalitarian society and religion. They decided to join religions that preached equality.

I have also pointed out that the religious conversion of depressed communities in India also implies a thirst for a personal relationship with divinity by depressed communities. I will discuss this aspect at length in the following chapter.

The following three basic attitudes of the Church and Indian converts in the context of their cultural migration from Hinduism to Christianity highlights the changing patterns of behaviour of converts in relationship with others in the Indian society.

(1) Imperialistic attitude: Christianity in the face of Hindu Casteism had claimed itself as both a specific and a Universal culture at the same time. The peculiar caste-oriented Hindu social system gave way to Christianity to challenge the validity of Hindu culture and to reduce it as a caste culture. Christianity presented itself as a universal human culture. Converts from depressed communities were

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(2) quick to affirm this egalitarian religion. The depressed communities after conversion developed a sense and an attitude of belonging to a powerful culture. In colonial India Christian culture was considered as a symbol of power in the nation. This was further expressed in converts' behaviour of superiority over their own relatives who chose not to convert. Hinduism reacted against this attitude and saw Christianity as an invading institution, threatening to Indian heritage and culture. This reaction of Hindus has become more firm in contemporary Indian politics and society.

(3) Defensive attitude: For some converts from uppercaste communities the intrusions of western culture through Christianity provoked a defensive attitude. The experience of upper caste converts was different to the depressed communities in the Hindu society. They did not want to make a defective stand in terms of their conversion into Christianity. They began to sense the loss of their own Indian identity and an alienation from their own people. It resulted in a defensive approach by initiating the inculturation process of the Christian faith in India. They wanted to be seen as a Christian community culturally integrated with Indian society. They developed an Indian Christian theology. This approach had come under severe criticism from the 1970s onward from Christian Dalit theologians. I have dealt with this in detail in chapter three of this thesis.

(4) The trans-cultural stand: In some quarters Christianity considered itself explicitly as part of a larger cultural domain in India. However converts to Christianity from depressed communities felt that their local culture in comparison to Christian culture was less fruitful in producing a better lifestyle for them. This attitude was a reaction against the Hindu caste culture. It resulted in converts becoming part of a larger Christian hegemonic culture ignoring and denigrating local cultural practices. Such an attitude makes trans-cultural doctrine an imperialistic one. This attitude has created enormous tension in different states in contemporary Indian society.

In order to understand the impact of religious conversion on the cultural identity of the convert: it is important to note that cultural studies is an 'interdisciplinary' subject, in the sense that it has taken a variety of methods from other disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences in order to explore different aspects of culture. Culture is a highly political subject in the sense that it explores the relationship between cultural activity and broader forms of social organization.

Cultural studies have moved through three phases in its history. The first phase was from 1956-1969, closely associated with the political movement known as the 'New Left': the second phase from 1970s was influenced by Marxist ideas who dealt with the aspects of false consciousness created in the capital society: and the third period since 1980s has moved steadily away from Marxism to 'new social movements'. In all these studies the emphasis has been on the relationship between cultural activity and broader forms of social organizations.

Raymond Williams in his famous book *The Long Revolution* has argued that culture encompasses three related elements: a 'lived element', a 'documentary element' and an 'ideal element'.

> "The 'lived' dimension of culture is what William calls a 'particular way of life, or what we could simply define as the various modes of behaviour which prevail among social groups". (Bounds, 1999, 14)

In order to understand the impact of religious conversion on the cultural identity of converts it will be important to identify:

The *'lived'* dimension: that serves to express the converts' new culture, its 'meaning and values underpinning their behaviour.

The *'documentary'* aspects: that helps in recording various modes of communication that converts intend to convey to the broader society.

The *'ideal'* dimension: that highlights the way converts begin to encompass their new identity and culture as 'high' or 'elite' in opposition to their previous identity.

In order to investigate these meaning and values, which emphasize culture in its lived, documentary and ideal forms it is important to analyse the meaning and values from socio- psychological and political and economic perspectives.

The impact of religious conversion on the cultural identity of converts in India is seen in their overall life transformation experience. After conversion to Christianity a process of subverting and undermining the Hindu culture started among converts. The religious conversion now had made these ordinary people adopt a dissenting or 'oppositional' perspective on Hindu culture. A sense of aesthetics caused by religious conversion began a 'counter culture' among converts. The attitude of converts towards society, which Christianity promulgated, made a deep positive impact on the converts psychologically. It was a new beginning where the focus was more on the hope for tomorrow and existence in a new culture where they began to feel 'fit' in the society.

It has been pointed out that the cultural identity of the converts before conversion into Christianity had been rooted in the Hindu caste system. More than 80% of Christians in India before conversion were considered culturally lower caste and socially untouchable people. In the Hindu caste system they were denied equal and respectable status in the society.

6. 8. 1 Social Impact

The first major impact of conversion on the cultural identity of converts is seen in their positive social identity in contrast to their lowly place in the Hindu social hierarchy. Their social disability was replaced with a respectable mobility in the mainstream of Indian society. They longed for an identity that could reflect their human dignity. They were now affiliated to a powerful community that was ruling the nation.

When people change their allegiance from one tradition for another, cultural absorption by converts is inevitable. Raj, in defense of the conversion of Indians, points out that

> "Each culture transmits, absorbs, alters or rejects cultural traits continuously for its own survival and growth. Cultural absorption is healthy. Cultural imposition is unhealthy". (Raj, 1986, 39)

The Aryans had imposed Hindu culture on the original Indian inhabitants. Through Hinduism the Aryans perpetuated an oppressive culture by segregating people on the basis of caste (Jati) and colour (Varna) through Varna Dharma (the proto-type of the caste system). Hindu culture remained stagnant and rigid. Casteism, a facet of Hindu culture, continued to have evil effects on the depressed masses. The upper castes in Hinduism were given an important social identity but the lower castes and particularly outcastes had no identity at all in the society.

For the lower castes and untouchables or outcastes in India Christianity was a way of finding a corporate respectable social identity.

Historian John Webster writes that the general consensus among scholars about the underlying motivation of religious conversion of the depressed community in India was,

"The search for improved social status, for a greater sense of personal dignity and self respect, for freedom from bondage to oppressive land owners". (Webster, 1992, 57)

Converts to the Christian faith began to construct a new social identity for their generation; they began to formulate a positive characterization of their social status. They had better prospects and a sense of dignified living as Christians in Indian society. They were able to raise their social status by having access to higher education and better work opportunities. They were now able to live more healthy and hygienic lives in the society.

This new identity formation led them to advance in the social sphere and this attracted many other depressed communities to follow these converts; the other depressed people around them began to appreciate Christianity. They entered into Christianity 'by sight, not by faith'. J.F. Kearnsa a missionary who had spent long time among Indian converts says,

"...Seeing their Christian countrymen free from boils (or rage) of quarrels, happier in their villages, cleaner and neater in their persons and to all intents and purposes more contented if not actually wealthier than themselves, by the simplest logical process they conclude Christianity to be a better religion than their own, and embrace it; nor is this to be wondered at when it is remembered that they walked by sight not by faith". (Jayakumar, 1999, 230)

However it is important to note some ambiguities in terms of relationships of converts with western people and also with their own relatives in the Indian society.
The relationship between converts and western people after conversion was not always equal in social living. The converts used different designations to relate to their new partners in faith. The terms 'Sahib" (Sir) and "Memsaab (Madam): point out the continuation of the subject mentality of converts. There continued to remain a sociological distance between converts and the western Christians. In chapter three I have pointed out that converts from lower caste backgrounds were faced with the problems of

several unjust systems and structures both within and around their church situations. However it is important to note that some missionaries encouraged the term "Brother" and "Sister" in describing their relations with the converts. This created a sense of belonging among converts as they began to relate to the western community.

There had been a persistent attitude among converts that they now belonged to a dominant Christian culture. This had made a major impact in terms of their relationship with others in the society. In the process of constructing a new culture the converts gradually found themselves becoming alien among their own people. In the process of forming a new religious identity they were beginning to get isolated from within the Indian society. The loss of identity from Hindu caste society made many converts accelerate the process of adaptation and acceptance of the basic rules and meaning underlying the Christian religion and culture unconditionally. However converts from the upper caste were rather keen not to loose their Indian identity in the society and began the process of inculturation of Hindu and Christian culture.

It is due to such attitude that the converts in the post colonial India suffered a sense of isolation and alienation in the society. Though India is a secular country, in a peculiar social structure of the Indian society Christians as a minority community continue to live in many a ways with foreign identity in terms of religion and culture. In the broader social identity there exists amongst Christians a sense of cultural depravity and confusion as western culture and Christian religion continues to be described by many as a threat to Indian culture and its heritage. In practice many Christians continue to be treated contemptuously as lower caste by upper caste Hindu. Dalit theologians raised the issue of their identity in the Church and in the society: it is noted that only since 1970 are converts from depressed community backgrounds seen as Christian leaders in the broader society of India. The Church has been dominated by upper caste converts for many years in the post colonial India.

But these ambiguities can not undermine the positive social impact the conversion made in the lives of converts. In comparison to the untouchability, dehumanising poverty,

social ostracism, and cultural and religious oppression of the masses in the Hindu caste system, converts began to evolve in changing their social image by adapting to a new social order through Christianity. The Hindu religious outlook has progressively tended to close its eyes to social realities and there had been gross aberrations of depressed communities. In contrast to the negative impact of the Hindu caste system, converts in Christianity began to develop positive energy and a respectable collective identity. They began to develop a new kinship and friendship in Christianity.

6. 8. 2 Psychological Impact

The process of social progress had a psychological impact on converts. Dalit theologian Raj says that sociologically,

> "Conversion may be considered as the development of a new conception of the self in which the entire personality or, as the theologians would say, the soul is reoriented around new values. It is the equivalent of what some psychologists call convergence, in which wholeness of being is built, unification of character is achieved, and a new integrated self that was torn between conflicting groups, values or desires. As such, it involves a whole person, not merely one or a few segments of life". (Raj, 2001, 24)

The impact of religious conversion on the cultural identity psychologically was seen in the formation of a new personality and a better self esteem among Indian converts. For generations these converts had lived with a negative characterization of their identities. From childhood lower and untouchable status in society was imprinted in their mind and soul. They lived with a depressed mind-set. They were forced by the Hindu caste system to live with an inferiority complex. They had no self-esteem. After conversion into Christianity they began to regain their self-hood and confidence. The converts began to reconstruct their lives within the liberating and healing culture offered by the Church. They received enough support to rebuild their new identity by assimilating a positive Christian message of love and a far better sense of togetherness in the mainstream of the

Christian fellowship. Conversion gave them a great psychological boost to make positive advancement in the society.

Psychologically, conversion to the Christian faith for depressed communities was a sharp and sudden break with their past life, attitudes, values and behaviour. They risked their lives to find a new identity. Most of the converts came into the Christian faith with deep scars of contempt and humiliation accorded to them in the Hindu religion. The impact of conversion into Christianity brought them great psychological release. William James the great protagonist and genius in the field of conversion analysis observed in his work on conversion,

> "Were we writing the story of mind, from the purely natural history point of view, with no religious interest whatever, we should still have to write down man's liability to sudden and complete conversion as one of his most curious peculiarities. …What is attained is often an altogether new level of spiritual vitality, a relatively heroic level, in which impossible things have become possible, and new energies and endurance shown. The personality is changed; the man is born anew, whether or not his psychological idiosyncrasies are what give the particular shape to his metamorphosis. A small man's salvation will always be a great salvation for him, and we should remember this when the fruits of our ordinary evangelicism look discouraging. Who knows how much less ideal still the lives of these spiritual grubs and earth worms…might have been, if such poor grace as they have received had never touched them at all" (Pickett, 1969, 155).

However in post colonial India psychologically Christians suffer with their minority status as a Christian community. Though they continued to exist in the face of their previous culture with some contact with it, for them now the Christian or western culture was the dominant one. Culturally converts are isolated from the mainstream Hindu community in which many of their relatives live as Hindu.

6. 8. 3 Economic Impact

The Church offered converts opportunity for growth and development. Education and health institutions made a major impact upon the economic welfare of converts. Many Christians today are seen as teachers, doctors and skilled people. Jobs and homes were provided to Christian converts. In Christianity they experienced an equal opportunity for social and economic development of their families. They were living a far more comfortable life within the Christian faith.

But it is not untrue that a large number of Christians in contemporary India continue to suffer poverty and economic discrimination. In post colonial India the contemporary Dalit theologians continue to highlight the fourfold alienation of the Christian Dalit along with others. This is succinctly stated by M. E. Prabhakar;

> "First, the state does not allow them to receive economic assistance or securing political representation even if they claim membership in Scheduled Caste communities: Second, other Dalits look at them with disfavour, as if the former has been helped by missionary patronage: Third: so called (upper) caste Christians treat Dalit Christians contemptuously and Fourth: the Dalit Christians are at odds with themselves, being divided on sub-caste, regional or linguistic basis". (Prabhakar, 1992, 43)

6. 9 Conclusion

Identity and culture are two basic building blocks of ethnicity. In this chapter it is highlighted that the depressed communities in India through conversion into Christianity have constructed new identity and culture for themselves. This chapter has addressed the problematic ethnic boundaries and meaning of out-caste depressed ethnic communities in India. By highlighting conversion motives particular attention is paid to the processes which enabled the formation of a new respectable ethnic identity and transformed the lives of converts.

By discussing the ethical and moral issues involved in the conversion of depressed communities in Christianity, the construction of a new identity is considered to be a protest against the Hindu caste structure and an Indian caste society – a dialectic played out by the outcaste depressed communities. Their conversion motives are defended in this chapter on ethical and moral grounds.

The impact of religious conversion on the cultural identity of a person is considered to be positive. The impact of conversion has been considered positive and helpful for the over all growth of converts. However the existing ambiguities in relation with the life of converts in the post colonial India culturally, socially, economically and politically have been pointed out.

In the following chapter the impact of religious conversion on cultural identity will be discussed in more detail in terms of their Spiritual growth and formation of a new religio-cultural identity resulting in becoming a new ethnic group as Indian Christians.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The impact of religious conversion on the cultural identity of converts

A new socio-spiritual worldview – formation of a new religio-cultural identity

7. 1 Introduction

In this chapter I have made an attempt to connect with the spirituality of converts through the lyrics and songs they composed and which were eventually compiled for congregational use. These lyrics can be of great help for South African Anglican Indian Christians in formulating mission praxis. Through these lyrics they can connect with the spirituality of their forefathers who were beginning to define their new life and form a new value system for living as a Christian people. These lyrics highlight the growing spiritual capacity of the converts in dealing with the pain and suffering of their past through Christian teachings. It is in this process of spiritual healing that they began to make a call to repentance to their perpetrators who had instilled unbearable pain in their lives through the Hindu caste system. These lyrics can be a powerful resource for the South African Anglican Indian Christians to evolve in beginning to live as a resurrection people in the post apartheid South Africa.

Religious conversion very often makes converts passionate, arrogant and defensive about their newfound faith. The defensive attitude very often leads them to disconnect totally from their past in relation to both social and family structures. Since in the Indian context religion, culture and society are intertwined, the transition made by converts from Hinduism to the Christianity had a complex impact both on them and on the wider Indian society.

They were converted into the faith of western people who were aliens and strangers to Indian culture and society. The convert's perception of his/her new identity in Christianity is an important factor in understanding the impact of religious conversion on

their cultural identity. They began to formulate a new socio-spiritual worldview resulting in the formation of a new religio-cultural identity for them.

7. 2 New Socio-Spiritual World view - formation of a new religio-cultural identity

Indian converts after conversion into Christianity, were beginning to construct a new cultural identity or a feeling of being a group influenced by the Christian religion and ideology.

The identity of people in general in the Hindu religion is described by the caste. The identity of the original Indians was described by the Aryans as 'Dasas' (subjects);

> "Unattractive and uncultured, with broad, flat noses and black skin, speaking a strange language and practicing crude magic in contrast to the prestigious Vedic ritual of the Aryans". (Stein, 1998, 56)

The Hindu law giver, after describing the nature and roles of the three higher groups of the ancient fourfold varna dharma (the proto type of the caste system described in the second chapter of this thesis) of the Vedic religion mentions the following with regard to Sudra the fourth and lowest group:

> "The ears of the sudra who listens intentionally when the Veda is being recited are to be filled with molten lead. His tongue is to be cut if he recites it. His body is to be split in twain if he preserves it in his memory". (Vedic Sacrifice, 1996, 173)

If this was the case of the lowest in a hierarchy of Hinduism one can imagine the lot of those who were still lower as the fifth group, outcaste and untouchable.

Religious conversion has quite a strong socio-spiritual impact on converts. J.F. Kearns from his missionary context in South India explains that,

"Christianity has made a vast improvement among those who have embraced it. It has enlarged their ideas, sharpened their intellects and above all taught them to feel they are superior to what they originally considered themselves to be…Christianity has taken a firm root here. The general advancement of the people in knowledge and their acquaintance with Scripture and the formularies of our Church are quite equal to that of an ordinary country congregation in England". (Jayakumar, 1999, 233)

According to missionaries and native priests, converts had shown visible signs of

"Enlightenment, awakening, spiritual formation, character formation, and disciplining to denote the change they were promoting among the newly formed Christian communities". (Jayakumar, 1999, 229)

It is already pointed out that converts had used Christianity as an escape route from the oppressive Hindu caste system. The motives of conversions were rooted in the socio-secular needs of the depressed communities. The Church had come forward to support the material, social and temporal spheres of converts' life. The conversion experience was an experience of liberation. After conversion converts began to experience a better human status in the society and promotion of all that made them feel genuinely human.

However human beings are not merely material beings. They possess both a spiritual and a material nature. They get integrated into a social life with a dual nature; Spiritual and Material. Therefore secular needs cannot necessarily minimize the human desire to know the divine in their social set up.

Vorster aptly points out the intensity of the conversion experience,

"Man is born beyond psychology and he dies beyond it but he can live beyond it only through vital experiences of his own – in religious terms, through revelation, conversion or rebirth". (Vorster, 1986: 135).

In religious conversion converts have to undergo a total socio-religious re-orientation. They enter into a new socio-spiritual worldview. In a new socio-spiritual worldview converts are empowered with a new belief system. Converts are expected to develop a new discipline and behaviour in relating to the new socio-spiritual structures and faith system. The religious institution helps them to shape a new religio-cultural identity.

The Indian converts were beginning to develop a new religio-cultural language in Christianity. This is the language of love. This language expressed their experience of liberation and affirmation of higher values for their lives. Scheler characterizes the inherent dynamism in actualisation of higher values as having a tendency of spiritualization of individuals and society.

He says,

> "This tendency creates the possibility for the real life struggle of the individual and society towards spiritualization". (Vorster, 1986:138)

7. 3 The formation of new religio-cultural identity – An experience of liberation and emancipation

The depressed communities in the Hindu religion were not allowed to have free access to their gods in the temple. They had to observe social and religious taboos. The gods were available to people as per their social gradation. The depressed communities were allowed to enter the temple up to a limit set by the upper caste to adore the statues of Hindu gods from a considerable distance. Their spiritual quest was governed by their inherent caste status in the society. This had a very negative socio-psychological and socio-religious impact on them.

Jayakumar in his book 'Dalit Consciousness and Christian Conversion' refers to a native magazine of the period. He writes that Anglican ecclesiology, architecture, Church music, choir, dress of clergy and holy awe attracted Dalit people tremendously. The freedom of

worship had a great impact on the consciousness of the Dalit because these classes in India had no access to big temples. But now in the Christian faith,

> "They have access into the very presence of God, under the blessings of the Holy Spirit, to effect the gradual elevation and spiritual improvement of these people". (Jayakumar 1999: 277)

Since Christianity offered a better social and religious environment, their spiritual quest was met with great satisfaction. The God of Christianity made much more sense to them. A new religio-cultural identity was in formation. The new experience of positive religious identity enabled them to grow in their understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And it was this positive religious experience, which led many converts to defend their newfound faith to their old or opposing groups.

The converts willingly met the requirements of the new faith to abandon the essentials of their old religion and replaced them with Christian ritual. This embracing of Christian faith began the process of formation of the new religio-cultural identity for converts with a new positive Socio-religious outlook. In Christianity the need of a 'comprehensive regeneration' of converts was initiated. The converts had to undergo a comprehensive transformation, which required both invisible experience and a visible change in life. This could be called a 'New Birth'.

7. 4 Articulation of the new relgio-cultural identity by converts through Lyrics/songs composed by them

It is important to note that the highest spiritual experience of the Christian faith for Indian converts is seen in the restoration of their social status. They viewed the God of Christianity as a Liberator, an Emancipator and a reconciling and just God. In the past their spirituality was imbedded in the Hindu caste system. They were deprived of even approaching God with dignity. The impact of religious conversion for these converts is seen in their efforts of building a new socio-spiritual worldview by formulating a new religio-cultural identity for them and their generations through Christian faith system.

They began to write their discoveries in these by expressing their feelings/sentiments, meaning and understanding about the God of the Bible in Jesus Christ. In these songs one can learn that the sacred symbols: viewed in the Birth, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ has enabled converts to initiate dialogue between them, God and society. They began to celebrate their new life in Jesus Christ.

The Indian converts were undergoing a serious cultural change. In the hymns of Ephraim and the stunning poetry of Aquinas one can recognize that theology was also presented in the form of songs/hymns. Though the experts in theology have a role to play, theology is not really done by the experts and then trickled down to the people for their consumption. Rather, if theology has to take culture or cultural change seriously than it is important to understand it through the language of converts who become agents of culture and cultural change. The role of the expert is more of a mid-wife who delivers what is received by the locals. Krikor Haleblian says aptly,

> "The believing community in each culture must take responsibility for contextualizing the gospel, but there is a place and a need for professionals who can act as 'brokers' in this difficult and ongoing task". (Bevan, 1999, 18)

I have chosen in this chapter a few songs from a large collection of lyrics/songs composed by the early converts. The purpose of analyzing these songs is:

- To unfold the socio-religious worldview of early converts in Christian faith.
- To see the way converts understood and interpreted their new life in Jesus Christ which helped them to make an attempt to dialogue with perpetrator.
- To understand the impact of religious conversion on their cultural identity resulting in the formation of a new religio-cultural identity of the converts.
- To invite South African Anglican Indian Christians to connect with this spiritual resource and use the insights and discovery of their forefathers in their missional role in New South Africa.

I have translated these lyrics from the Urdu, Hindustani and Hindi languages in English. I have also used the translated version of Tamil/Telugu/Kanad lyrics. In my analysis of these lyrics I have traced certain terms and themes to explain the socio-spiritual worldview and formation of a new religio-cultural identity of converts in India through Christianity.

7. 4. 1 Methodological Observations

For a critical and constructive engagement in understanding the voice of the converts through these lyrics it is important to note that these are the voices of the depressed communities in the Indian society who had now accepted the Christian faith. In order to enhance the process of interpretation of these lyrics I have observed the following methodological observations:

(1) The common ground between the Biblical world and the world of the depressed people: the integral interconnection between Gospel of Jesus and the struggling marginalized and oppressed people in the society. The depressed communities who were beginning to unfold their socio-religious worldview in Christianity could very clearly read in the Bible God's concern towards alienated and marginalized people. The converts were quick to encapsulate the teachings of the God of the Bible.

(2) The quest for liberation by depressed communities: an inter-relatedness between the Bible's and the depressed people's worlds. The Biblical narratives with liberation potential had matched the quest of depressed communities towards the liberation from the psychological, cultural and social oppression. In these lyrics the converts were beginning to interpret their understanding of God and the Christian religion.

(3) I have highlighted through interpretation of these songs the liberation and emancipation experience of converts based on the Biblical foundations. The lyrics offer an Indian interpretation by depressed Indians of the Christian faith. These lyrics can now be interpreted more intelligently through Dalit theology in India. The impact of religious conversion on the cultural identity of converts can be seen

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in the empowerment of these converts who are now getting organized in their struggle for freedom through Christian spiritual resources and forming their own religio-cultural identity.

The following songs are composed by converts from the lower class of Indian society both in South and North India. Converts were beginning to conceptualize and theologize their faith. They were now beginning to interpret the Christian religion. The songs in the following three sections highlight the converts' interpretation of God in Jesus Christ. They began to affirm the God of Christianity as a just and reconciling God. He loved poor and downtrodden people.

I have divided my collections of songs in the following three different sections:

Section one – focuses on Jesus as mediator and who also had brought reconciliation between God and people and the whole world through his birth, death, resurrection.

Section two – highlights the common ground between the biblical world and that of depressed communities.

Section three – speaks about the religious sentiments of converts in Northern India

The songs are appended to this chapter. However I have taken English translated versions of all the songs to highlight the salient points.

The first two sections are the collections of songs composed by the converts from South Indian backgrounds and the third section refers to the converts from the North Indian backgrounds.

These songs will help us to understand the kind of discoveries the converts have made about their new found faith. These songs also provide us with evidence that the impact of religious conversion on the cultural identity of converts is clearly seen in the formation of

a new religio-cultural identity of the converts. The lyrics in these sections speak about the common ground between the biblical world and that of the depressed people. As they began to grow in Christian faith they were beginning to grasp Christian teachings and doctrines of atonement, sin and salvation, the concept of the Holy Trinity and life after death. This was a unique discovery of depressed communities for creating a new ethnic identity in India where they were eventually recognized as Indian Christians by the society.

It is in these conversion experiences expressed in the writings of these lyrics that the contemporary Dalit movement is rooted.

7. 4. 2 SECTON ONE – *The Incarnation of Jesus*

The four songs in this section focus on the understanding of the converts about the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

Song 1 – The Incarnation of Jesus brings blessings all over the world

(1) An angel Gabriel foretold, / well established is His name in Heaven

    When Virgin Mary heard of this name,
 She prayed and tarried, so that the power of it / will bring blessings all over the world

(2) You too can call upon this name / for this name is revered ev'ry where
    The Devil and its army tremble and flee away,
    And most heinous of the sinners / will find his liberation

(3) Emperors and Kings laud their name, with loud praises, / they hail this matchless name, As the essence of God's word, it causes heavenly songs;
      Rich and abundant in grace, it enlightens the whole world

Converts were well versed with the Christmas narratives. *V/s 1:* They were beginning to use religious language based on biblical narratives, describing clearly the purpose of incarnation which was to bring blessings all over the earth.

In V/s **2** metaphors like 'The Devil and its army' and 'heinous sinners' reflect very clearly the ability of converts to understand the wrath of God against the forces of evil (which is understandably related to their own history of pain and pathos). What is interesting in this verse is the capacity and courage of converts as they invite the perpetrator '*you too can call upon this name*' to encounter the God they have discovered. It is evident that they were beginning to form a spiritual understanding based on a suffering God in Jesus who reconcile with sinners by forging the *most **heinous of the sinners**.* They were beginning to discover reconciliation in and through the suffering of Jesus Christ. Shreiter in his understanding of Christian reconciliation will consider this experience,

> "An important corollary flows from this insight that God takes initiative, that reconciliation is some thing that we discover rather than achieve. This insight reverses a moment in the process of reconciliation that we usually expect. We expect that evildoers should repent and to seek forgiveness…". (Shreiter, 1999, 45)

In V/s **3** the terms attributed to Jesus - 'matchless', 'essence of God's word' and one 'rich and abundant in grace' - points towards the converts' growing maturity in entering into a theological understanding of the birth of Jesus Christ as God's initiative to restore the broken humanity and establish his kingdom on earth.

Song 2 – Incarnate God - the Righteous Messiah, born to set all people free

(1) In the tribe of royal David, as the son of Virgin Mary
*Jesus Christ the King of Kings is **born to set all people free.***
(2) To deliver all ungodly men from horrid fear and pain

Righteous Messiah descended as the Babe in Bethlehem.

(3) Lo! the three Kings from far east, saw the shining star so bright

   They set on their journey to behold the Babe with offerings right

*(4) Christ, the only dear Son of God, **suffered and bled on the cross***

   *Glorious **He rose from the dead,** Lord of life and Victor true.*

Jesus for them was an incarnate God or God descended as Righteous Messiah as the babe in Bethlehem to set all people free. This theme is well developed by liberation theologians through the Nazareth manifesto. Once again the song unfolds the new religious language and understanding of Christian doctrine based on the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It was the beginning of a process where converts were beginning to sense a freedom from caste captivity. They were beginning to sing the Lord's song discovering the word of God for the oppressed and the oppressor. They were beginning to comprehend Christian understanding of a reconciling God actively involved through incarnation in healing His creation. Paulo Freire who developed powerful insight through his revolutionary act of helping people to learn to read comments,

> "As the oppressors dehumanize others and violet their rights, they themselves also become dehumanized. As the oppressed fighting to be human, take away the oppressors power to dominate and suppress, they restore to the oppressors the humility they had lost in the exercise of oppression. It is only the oppressed who, by freeing themselves free oppressors. The latter, as an oppressive class, can free neither others nor themselves". (Brown, 1983, 149)

Song 3 – Incarnate God – God's own only Son

(1) On the day that the Father had appointed He did come down

   *From heaven to earth **as Saviour** he was born verily in Bethlehem town*

   *He was **God's own only son,** he was with the Father One ..... aha*

*(2) **He did descend from Heaven**, Incarnate on this earth below*

   And he did show His mercy to all. As was foretold some ages ago

   *He was Virgin Mary's son; he **in love had equaled none** .... Aha*

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*(3) He came down **to remove burden of sin and save us from hell***

*He came to **bruise the serpent's head, and make us good and happy as well***

He the Son of Father above came to save us just out of love ……. Aha

This song unfolds profound change which was taking place in terms of the religious culture of converts. Apart from the growing understanding of the scripture relating to the prophesy recorded in the Old Testament about Jesus, their comprehension of the unity of the Godhead found in the Christian Creeds (both Nicene and Apostolic) about the relationship between God the Father and God the Son is clearly unfolded. The formation of a new religious culture is profoundly seen, as the *'Serpent'* for them now is the devil and not the one who is seen on Lord Shiva's (Hindu God) head or hanging in his neck. This is a radical shift where a sacred symbol 'serpent' becomes a sign of the 'devil' as taught in Christian faith. This is a major impact of religious conversion on the religio-cultural identity of converts. What is very important to note is the image of the serpent which in Hinduism is not devilish always, is now for converts an evil to which Jesus came to *'bruise the serpent's head'* (vs. 3); significant in breaking with certain former cultural and religious symbols.

Song 4 – The Incarnate Jesus - the earth's redeemer

*(1) The one who **gives salvation,** and sure **strength in affliction***

All blessings to His children, and the one who rules the heaven

*(2) He came, as **the earth's Redeemer,** to set his own people free*

And tested anguish and pain, on the cruel Calvary's tree

*(3) He is **the Ever-living God,!** only **God of Truth,** He is!*

*Only **God who loved man most,** and descended down from His post*

(4) He broke the Foe's pow'r and then to grave Jesus did go

*He'll **wipe the tears of the meek,** unto His glory we all go*

This song unfolds the evidence that converts were now building an entirely different relgio-culture for themselves. The term 'salvation', 'redeemer', 'the ever living God',

'only God of truth' and 'God who loved man most' is indicative of their comprehension of Christian doctrine of grace and love. It is not a statement of fact but a confession of faith. It was their experience and they were discerning what God was doing in their context? This conceptualization had the background of their pain and pathos in the Hindu caste system and now an expression of freedom and association with a better religious system. There had been drastic change in their understanding of life in this world. They were not romanticizing any more their pain but highlighting the power that emerges from the pain. It is only through pain and anguish, on cruel Calvary tree that Jesus broke the foe's power. The suffering now was understood as God given strength to deal and defeat the perpetrator. They were becoming confident about their life now in the world and hereafter.

7. 4. 3 SECTON TWO – *The Bible and the World of Depressed Communities*

In this section I have used eight songs to highlight a growing healing religious culture amongst converts. Jesus is described by them as healer and burden bearer. All the songs in this section speak about the trust of converts in the healing and caring God of Christianity. This section presents a serious transition and affirmation by converts. The Bible is used as a liberative and praxis-oriented resource to express their religious fervour. It is in this section that we find converts expressing their liberation from casteist oppression, and identifying themselves with new religio-cultural energies from a new-found religious and social base.   The following songs highlight the converts' discovery of a new way of life as they began to make their profound affirmations about their faith in the God of the Bible.

Song 1 – Jesus our Master and Saviour

*(1) Calling all **the labouring and the laden**/at His feet that their burden he may lift*
*   At His word their sorrows fully past/their trouble on Him cast,*
*   Their **sickness healed** at last, with all to Him hold fast*
*(2 -3) Bringing Him, **our Master and our Saviour**/where his sword must all false*
*pretences slay/ That **His peace may shatter human pride**/the right from wrong divide*
*The **widow's cause decides, injustice set aside**.*

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In **V/s 1** Jesus Christ is considered as God who calls all the labouring and the laden to remove their sorrows and troubles of the past and to divide right from wrong and to set aside injustices. In Jesus' sacrifice the converts are beginning to find an integral interconnection between their suffering and the sufferings of Jesus. The concept of suffering for depressed communities in India is very crucial. The mass conversion in Buddhism in India had been due to the emphasis put on suffering by Gautama Buddha. Jesus for them is not only a liberator but a burden bearer.

In **V/s 2-3** we find affirmation. 'Jesus our Master and Saviour'. This reflects a spirit of total surrender and confidence in the God of Christianity. Again in these two verses there is a serious transition culturally. The concept of peace in Jesus is acknowledged against the culture of violence. They suffered violence to their souls from the pride of the upper caste. Another area of concern expressed in these verses is the cause of widows. There had been historical injustices duly sanctioned by Hindu custom committed against widows in the Indian society. The issues of the widow marriages and their welfare in India even today are a great concern in Indian society. This is duly raised by even enlightened Hindu organizations in India today.

Song 2 – Love Divine

*(1) He's my **Choicest blessings** fine, He's my **closest Love-Divine***
    *He's my **joy and fortune-finder**, **Kith and Kin** He shall remain.*
*(2) He's **my light** when darkness reigns, **sole comfort** in anxious pains*
    *When laid up with painful sickness, He is **my medicine and my reins.***
*(3) he is **the bread of life** so pure, heart's desire and guard secure*
    *He is the **song of songs and solace**, He is **my way to life** endure.*

This is a very intense conviction and affirmation of faith in the God of the Bible by the convert. It is a deepest expression of trust and dependence on Jesus. Reading of the Bible had caused a dynamic and vibrant conversation between converts and God. For the convert who had written this song the God of the Bible stands as dynamic source of

energy in such affirmation where God becomes the choicest blessings, Love-Divine, Joy, Fortune finder, kith and Kin, Light, Comfort, Medicine, Bread of life, Guard, Song of Songs and Way to life endure. It reveals a profound discovery of a personal God in Christianity by the converts.

Song 3 – Jesus a good shepherd

*(1) Jesus is the symbol of God's love/He is **the true image of God** above*
   *He's the king of Kings and the mighty/and for those who call **a shepherd good***
*(2) On His shoulders Christ **Jesus carried/that cross for the sake of souls wearied***
    *He is **the eternal life** and refuge/for all souls that are in grave servitude*
(3) For eternal life the only way/for the believers, He's heaven's sure stay
   *He's the only **hope for a peaceful day**/and the one for all to praise and pray.*

Again the shepherd image of God in Jesus connects with their pain and pathos of the past. The description of Jesus e.g. the symbol of God, true image of God, King of Kings, a Shepherd, giver of eternal life and refuge, and the only hope of God reflects the traditional doctrinal discourses in the Christian faith. The converts were getting involved in formulating a theology of religion with small 't'. This process of understanding proved very helpful in the formation of a new religio-cultural identity for the converts. They discovered that in Christianity there is hope for a peaceful life and a peaceful future. Eternal life relating to the shepherd image of Jesus speaks of future protection and security in Christian faith.

Song 4 – Incarnate God – we worship Thee

(1) Thou who wast incarnate God, we worship Thee Saviour of this earth beneath, we worship Thee: Thou who climbedst on the Cross, To die to give us Life Eternal.
   God the Son who saved us all, we worship Thee

(2) Wonder worker of the worlds, we worship Thee / Heavenly Teacher, true and bold, we worship Thee: Thou who dwellest in our hearts, through invisible to our eyes

    God the Holy Spirit, kind, we worship Thee

(4) God of three distinctive works, we worship Thee / God almighty, Three in One, we worship Thee: God of God, and Lord of Lord, Thou merciful and mighty One

    God the Holy Trinity, we worship Thee.

In this Jesus is described as the incarnate God, the Saviour, Wonder Worker, Heavenly Teacher, True and Bold, Holy Spirit, Kind God, God of three distinctive works, The Holy Trinity. The conceptualization of Trinitarian understanding of God is quite remarkable in this song. It reflects the converts' understanding of the progressive revelation of God in the Bible who had been progressively engaged in the work of transformation in collaboration with humans. Right from the Exodus of Israel from the bondage of Pharaoh to the incarnation of Jesus to reveal the vision and values of God's Kingdom on this earth, leading to *Metanoia (repentance)* a call for radical change from the world communities. God of the Bible is seen progressively engaging in transforming communities.

Song 5 – Lord of Life

(2) When the curse mountain like descended on the earth / furiously like a devouring fire, You took pity on us, gave up your power, / and bore our curse of sin on your head

*(3) **Lord of life,** You broke your body to be **the elixir/ for us** all who die in sin You shed your most precious blood/ from your five wounds to be our true soul-cleansing purge*

*(4) **My only God, full of mercy and matchless grace,** / I come to you seeking peace and rest; Accept me, sinner of sinners, and remake me/ Lord, after your own image*

Jesus is explained as a Suffering God who bore the curse of sin, broke his Body; shed his blood, Lord of life, my only God, full of mercy and matchless grace. There is a sense of exclusiveness emerging in the expression of the lyrists about the God of the Bible. Confessing Jesus as 'My Lord', a profound affirmation that eventually gave rise to the numbers of Evangelical Christians in India. The word 'Salvation' is very common in Indian Christian vocabulary and form the Christian perspective. Jesus as ultimate truth is deeply rooted in the faith system of converts in India. Andrew Wingate in his on Christian conversion in India says,

> "Salvation is integrally related to Jesus Christ, to live in the power of the Holy Spirit, is 'to be saved'. Integral to this is the appropriation of what Jesus has done for us, through his birth, ministry, death and resurrection…this is not just an abstract and spiritual state. It is about this world as much as the next it is about entering an inaugurated kingdom of God now, as well as its consummation in the future". (Wingate, 1999, 279)

Song 6 – My Heavenly Manna

(1) *You are **my comfort** and **my healing** in ev'ry sickness*
*I have none as **my kindred** in all this unfriendly world.*

(2) ***My king! My heavenly manna, my priestly intercessor.***
My life, my soul companion, great fount of every blessing.

(3) ***My way, my shield, my fortress, my solid rock and refuge.***
My God, my source of life, my good shepherd never failing.

(4) *Help me to run my race, Lord ne'er from Thy truth and grace part.*
Then I will join the heavenly hosts singing praise eternal

An absolute trust and confidence in this new found God of Christianity. These are intense emotions and expression of total commitment to Jesus. Jesus is identified by the converts as my comfort and healing, my kindred, my heavenly manna, my priestly intercessor, my sole companion, my way, my shield, my fortress, my solid rock, my source of life and my good shepherds. The heavenly manna also metaphorically reflects the quenching of the spiritual thirst of many converts coming from depressed communities in India.

Song 7 – Jesus the source of blessings

*(1) When my God strengthens my feet, I'll cross o'er every **slipp'ry mountain;***
  And will continue to run my weary way;
   Strengthened, like a hart, I'll run my long and weary way.
   Strengthened, like a hart, I'll run my long and weary way.

*(2) Let me not feel anguished, **having none to claim as kith and kindred,***
   Lord, let me ne'er feel as guideless in this world
  Let me never feel as blinded in my course of life
  Let me never feel as blinded in my course of life

*(3) **Gracious God, most pure and mighty, loving Father, source of blessings,***
   You provide me constantly with all I need
   Then why should my faithless soul be filled with anxiety?
   Then why should my faithless soul be filled with anxiety?

Converts were always anxious about their future insecurity in the society. A sense of utter dependence on God for their future progress is a typical expression from the converts in their early experience of being Christian. Jesus is described as gracious God, most pure and mighty, loving Father, source of blessings.

Song – 8 – Safe in God's arm

*(1) God **my father** will never do*
  Any evil against my soul

Even when He chastises me
I know well, my Lord loves me still,

(2) When my trials and troubles swell
Blissful turns the low state of mine
*I become a friend of **my Lord***
Who drank His cup of agony.

(3) Now I do not long for this world
Nor I mourn the loss of my all
When will I meet my God in heaven
*And rest in peace, **safe in God's arms***

In song 8, Jesus is described as God, my father and my Lord. It is the emotion of a suffering human being who is quick to connect with a suffering God. The phrase, 'Safe in God's arms', who is simultaneously reflected as vulnerable in this song in terms of His own agony, reflects the major impact in terms of interpreting life now and life hereafter by converts. They were not scared of their vulnerability. They were connecting with the inner power of God in their worldly and human powerlessness. Shreiter's quest for a redeeming narrative will connect with this cry of the convert.

> "Crying out is an address, an appeal to God that what we face reaches beyond our ability to cop. It is in this awareness of our helplessness…that we become able to accept other narratives to counter act the narrative of the lie. Our own narrative lies in disarray and, even if reconstructed, can not be the same again. We need to find other narratives that can pick up the fragments of our own and piece them back". (Shreiter, 1999, 37)

7. 4. 4 SECTION THREE – *Converts' sentiments and intense feelings of faith*

The lyrics in this section are composed by the converts from North Indian backgrounds. In this section some powerful metaphors for Jesus are used. Converts were settling down in their new faith and were beginning to develop a profound understanding of the Christian faith with intense sentiments.

73B – Jesus like a mother

*(1) Like **a mother,** God gives us peace*
Peace in Jesus Christ
(2) Like a mother, He suckled me at the breasts
And remove all troubles.
(3) Like a mother, He will never leave nor forsake us
Halleluiah, Halleluiah

The image of Jesus is one of a mother for the converts. In Jesus they had peace and security. He keeps them in his bosom like a mother never to leave or forsake them. Through the Church the image of Jesus provided these converts with Very powerful feelings of security. It is in this context that Webster said,

> "It ought to be frankly recognized that it may be towards the Motherhood of the Church, rather than Fatherhood of the saviour from sin that the faces of paraiyars and aboriginal races of India are slowly being turned…". (Wingate, 1999, 19)

The metaphor used here for God as Mother is not an invention, or the replacing God with a Goddess. This is an intense feeling of security expressed by converts. In the Old Testament feminine metaphors of God carrying Israel and giving birth in pain, suckling her at the breast, comforting and covering her nakedness are quite prominent. Medieval mystics such as St. Anselm and Dame Julian of Norwich stressed the nourishing, nurturing aspects of God's love.

119 – O Lord, keep us together

(1) Blessed is the family that lives near Jesus
*The peace dwells in it as they **pray together***
*(2) **Blessed is the family that loves the name of Jesus***
Even children respect this name as they pray together

(3) Blessed is the family that pray to Jesus

The parents love the scripture and teach the same to their children

*(4) **O Lord! Keep us together to receive your peace***

Let us grow each day in your love and in your teaching

The name of Jesus was a uniting factor for the converts. Emphasis was put on daily family prayers and growing commitment to Jesus. Through such disciplines of family prayers a new religio-cultural identity of converts was beginning to form. Blessed is the family which prays to Jesus, respects Jesus, listens to the words of Jesus, learns and lives the teachings of Jesus and grows and meets in the name of Jesus. This indicates that converts were in deep process of stabilizing their new Christian identity. The emphasis on the theme: Lord Keep Us together gave rise to ecumenical movement in India. A call for united Church praying together was made by Christians in India. The church union movements and the formations of the Church of South India in 1947 and the Church of North India in 1970 are good example of the impact this spiritual journey of converts had on the wider church. George Ninan an Important leader of the Church in India writes on the Ecumenical journey of Indian Church and says,

> "In all identified areas of ecumenical concern, the church in India has made great impact, standing out as major contributor to ecumenical thought and praxis". (Williams, 2005, 20)

Song - 47 – For a good healthy look your heart must Change

*(1) It is not to impersonate a character, but **heart should be changed***

*Not one or two things, but it **should be completely changed***

(2) For a good healthy look, it is important to change the clothes

But for the truthful living the heart should be completely changed

(3) When you hear the Bible, let your heart get touched

*It is **important that Jesus touches you** and that your heart is changed*

(4) My heart should cry for its negligence

Wake up O my soul, let your ways be right as your heart get changed
(5) Those who have gone before us, will not meet until the judgement day
   Those who are left behind, let the Holy Spirit dwell in the heart and be changed

The change and new identity is further developed by raising the importance of being changed at the heart and not just in appearance. There had been a growing holistic approach towards a change of identity and development of Christian Spirituality. The lyric unfolds that converts were serious about their spiritual encounter in Christianity: it is not simply the western clothes and mannerisms that matter but it is also important to have Christian moral and ethical values as part of living in society. The heart should change to do justice, to understand the true teachings of the Bible, to change the perspective in life and to become resourceful community to affect change in the society. To be holy by receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit and forgiving the perpetrator who had caused them pain and anguish in the society. It was a process through which converts were now beginning to heal their hurts of the past.

87 – The Eternal life flows from His wounded side

Chorus - We can not explain your glory O Jesus Christ

(1) You have left heaven to bring salvation
So that the sinners could be saved
*(2) You give **sight to the blind and heal the lepers***
You have caused the dead to have risen life
*(3) You have **walked on the waters; you have scolded the storm***
You have saved your disciples
(4) Forgive my sins, give me your vision
In you I have met the Lord
*(5) **Eternal life flowed from your body through blood and water on the cross***
This servant will always praise you for your grace

In the process of the formation of religio-cultural identity the testimonies of converts using metaphors are a very important factor in revealing the ongoing changes in the life of converts. They acknowledged Jesus as the glorious, the Saviour, the healer who gives sight to the blind, heals the leper, raises the dead, shows his power over the nature, forgives the sinner, dwells in the hearts of people, gives sweet nectar to all believers through sharing his blood on the cross. Jesus had become their personal God.

273 – My heart is badly wounded through Christ's pain

(1) I have now come to your door to pray
In submission having tears in my eyes, I come to beg you.
(2) I have come empty handed O merciful God
Bless me for the sake of the prophet king
(3) Give me your Holy Spirit and make me clean
I beg you in the name of the Son of God
(4) Grant me a righteous and holy life O God
And bless me for the sake Christ the king
(5) My heart is badly wounded through Christ's pain
Heal me through the blood of Jesus Christ

Islam had colonized India for centuries and many Hindu lower cast communities had converted to Islam in Indian History. However many such Muslims were converted to the Christian faith during the British Imperial rule in India.

The lyrist of this song is a Muslim convert. The terms used to explain the relationship of a convert with Jesus Christ in this lyric are: Submission (Daste-Basta), Beg (Iltija), Clean/Holy (Paak), Pain (Dard).

For converts from a Muslim background the Christian message of assurance and certainty about their future life was very important. The concept of submission was very natural to Muslim converts. What is very important in this lyric is the vulnerability of God shown

on the Cross as a new discovery by the convert. The God of the Bible becomes quite personal and does not act as a Monarch somewhere beyond reach as found in Islam. In *Ayate-el-Kursi* and *Sura-I-Akhlas* in the Holy Quran, the concept of God is one of 'the ultimate Monarch' He does not need any one – 'He begetteth not – nor is he begotten and there is none like him.'

One must note that in India the poor Muslims are condemned by the conservative Islam as those who pay homage to peer (Saints and spiritual leaders), worship at shrines, pay homage to graves of the Saints by offering sweets and flowers, believe in Tazia (a structure of bamboo and paper recalling the martyrdom of Imam Husain - they hang petitions on this structure and carry them) and offer reverent homage to the Spirit. All this is done to win the good graces of God and miracles for healing, for the childless getting children and for a secure feeling of a personal God. In other word the Indian poor Muslims even today long to connect with some personal God who can assure them of security and assurance for their life now and hereafter.

Converts from economically depressed Muslim backgrounds were quick to respond to Jesus as in Him they discovered their personal God who could meet all their hearts' desires.

Song 275 – Jesus a good shepherd

Chorus – Jesus is my Shepherd, I sing His praises
A little lamb I am who will continue to follow Him

(**1**) He makes me eat in green pasture and leads me to drink from the quiet streams
He protects me and in His grace I am safe and satisfied
(**2**) He walks with me in the valley of death and in all the dangers in my life
He encourages me and nurses my wounds
(**3**) He provides me with delicious food in the presence of my enemies
my cup overflows

He purifies me and gives me His Spirit and assures me of His goodness all my life

In Lyric 275 based on psalm 23: this metaphor played an important factor in terms of a sense of protection the converts felt in Christian faith. The shepherding ministry of the Anglican Ministers had played a major role in keeping converts together. Jesus my Shepherd is a profound affirmation from the converts. They wanted to be led and guided by the Jesus of Christianity. The converts were confident that faith in Jesus will find them the green pasture and streams of water. Jesus shall not leave or forsake them even if they had to walk through the valley and the shadow of death; a total assurance of being led and protected by the Christian God.

Song – 274 – Jesus the true light

*(1) O God, **you lack nothing***
*There is **no one so generous like you***
(2) In your Being you hold all virtues
Nothing good can be found in a human being without you
(3) You hold the treasure of all blessings O Christ
*In heaven and earth **no one is richer than you***
(4) Make my heart tender/soft through your Holy Spirit
It is not possible for us to correct it
(5) O son of truth you are the light of the world
There is no light without your presence

In Lyric 274 Jesus is described as the one who supersedes every image both divine and human in this world. Jesus is the only source of goodness and virtues. Only he can transform the lives of people. Jesus is the light of the world. Without Jesus there will be darkness everywhere. Again we find an exclusive understanding of the God of the Bible.

Song - 566 – Jesus the creator, sustainer and emancipator

*(1) **The One who removes the sadness of the poor people,***

Fills them with peace: Makes them happy, removes their pain

Praise the Creator, Sustainer, and Emancipator

(2) Born in human form He came

He sacrificed His life to liberate people, All praise to you

O giver of happiness *- Praise the creator, Sustainer, Emancipator*

(3) He breaks the chain of death, To give imperishable life to people

To heal, to comfort and to restore them

Praise the Creator, Sustainer, and Emancipator

(4) Praise Him, Praise Him all you people

Men and women together you praise: Make a loud noise and extol Him.

Praise the Creator, Sustainer, and Emancipator

In lyric **566** The terms and phrases, for example remover of sadness, pain and poverty, Healer and comforter, creator, sustainer, emancipator are used to describe their experience of liberation from the bondage of the caste system of Hinduism.

The lyrist in this song describes Jesus as *Victorious Jesus and Incarnate Jesus.* The term *'Jaya'* (Victorious): the converts' understanding of the concept of 'Jaya' or victory was rooted in the story of the great battle found in the Hindu epic literature (both Mahabharata and Ramayna). They interpreted Jesus as a God victorious over the dark forces. These dark forces had reference to their plight in Hinduism. Jesus victoriously liberated them in the battle against the inhumanity committed by the caste system. They believed that Jesus won the battle and gave them *'Akshay Jeevan'* (imperishable life).

The *'Nartan-dhar'* (in human body) and *'Avatara'* (incarnation): they conceptualized Jesus Christ as incarnations of their time. Jesus had incarnated to emancipate them from a very vicious and inhuman situation in Hinduism.

Song – 578 – Jesus calls all the needy people

*Chorus - O people of the world, come, King **Jesus calls you***

(1) **Those who have no place and no respect in this world**
    To give you a kingdom, King Jesus calls you
(2) **Those who are dying, hungry and thirsty**
    To give you free meal and water, King Jesus calls you
(3) *The crown of thorns on his head and bleeding ribs are his mark*
    By offering his wounded hands, *King Jesus calls you*
(4) **Come brother and sisters, come and experience Him**
    To lift all your burdens, King Jesus calls you

In lyric **578** Jesus is acknowledged as the King, the giver of respect and food, the burden bearer, the one who calls us with wounded hands, a suffering King. The lyrist's emotions attached to Christ's suffering are parallel to his own experience of pain and suffering, poverty and humiliation in the Hindu caste system. In this lyric there are two important concepts of God the lyrist has conceptualized.

Jesus is repeatedly described as the *'Raja'* (King). He is described as the righteous King (*Dharmic Raja)*. The concept of the Righteous King was quite prominent in the Hindu system. "Ram Rajya" (A just Kingdom) hopes for the kingdom of Lord Ram, as a just kingdom was deeply prevalent amongst suffering people. They believed when the Lord Ram will come he will rule the world with righteousness and will destroy the Devil. Though the term used for the Righteous king was *'Dhamma'* or *'Dharma'*, I don't think that the communities who belonged to lower caste or lived as untouchables had any clue about the concept of Dharma.

The term 'Schide Haath' (wounded hands); an invitation to people through Jesus' wounded hands attracted the many depressed communities into Christian faith. Mass conversion into Buddhism in India was based on the concept of suffering. Now in Christianity for many converts the Suffering Christ became a big attraction particularly for those who entered into the Christian faith as down trodden people.

7. 5 The on going impact of religious conversion on the cultural identity of converts and on the mission of the church in India

7. 5. 1 New Ethnic Identity Formation and Transformation

By listening, reading and interpreting the above songs I have highlighted the discovery of converts of a just God in Christianity. They gathered around the Christian Church to learn more about this God through Bible reading, prayers and Christian rituals. They were also receiving Christian customs and symbols. Christians were visibly recognized by others in the society because the cross of Jesus became part of an ornament hanging on the neck of both Christian men and women in India.

The implication of these songs was quite profound in the lives of the children and generations of these converts who were now able to form a firm Christian Ethnic Identity in India. Their lives were transformed. They are now known as Christian people or in villages as 'Isai Jaati' (Christian caste).

The late Victor Prem Sagar, the Moderator of the Church of South India, influenced by the songs of the early converts, speaks about the implication of the Good News of Jesus and Indian culture that had emerged from these lyrics. He encouraged the present generation to express their Christian Ethnic Identity and experience through songs and lyrics. He said,

> "Songs and Lyrics should be written and sung in all our languages with Indian ragas (tunes) capturing the essence of the Good News in relation to the Indian cultural heritage including the areas of obedience in our social, economic and political responsibilities, deepening the sense of commitment for others and

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owning the liberating forces of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for renewal of the nation and communities". (Selvanayagam, 1994, 170-171)

Andrew Wingate in his research on the Church and conversion in India gives emphasis to the meaning of conversion as understood by Albert I. Gordon. Albert had distinguished two equally valid meaning for conversion. Albert, apart from the classical definition of conversion by William James which centers on the psychological process, emphasizes the 'Ecclesiastical conversion' of Indian converts. For Albert, Ecclesiastical conversion is,

> "The formal act of identifying oneself with a religious faith which has set values, attitudes, beliefs and practices other than those originally adhered to. It is a conscious moving from one organized religion to another. In contradiction to inner conversion which generally occurs within the original church setting, this form, ecclesiastical conversion, involves a complete shift in allegiance to another and different faith. It may involve an entirely new set of values and a completely new way of life". (Wingate, 1999, 236)

The lyrics in all three sections vividly reflect the common ground between the Biblical world and the world of the converts who came from depressed backgrounds. The integral interconnectedness between the Gospel of Jesus and the converts is clearly highlighted in the understanding and experience of Jesus Christ as described by the converts through these lyrics. The Biblical narratives used in these lyrics point out that in Jesus Christ their quest for liberation from psychological, cultural and social oppression is accomplished. They were now part of a new socio-religious worldview.

We discover in these lyrics a community who lived as a 'sinned-against people'. The experience of liberation and emancipation in and through Christianity from the clutches of the Hindu caste society gave them a new name and a new identity. Their religious conversion made a big impact in changing their attitude and behaviour in the society. The impact of religious conversion on the cultural identity of converts was seen in building their new life and new identity through Christian spiritual and cultural resources.

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Indian conversions were mainly ecclesiastical conversions, though they do include aspects of the psychological process and centre on social process. They were now seen as an exclusive group building their exclusive identity in Indian society.

However, many of these songs based on biblical stories have also played a major role in transmitting the Gospel of Jesus orally to those who could not read or write at the grassroots. This speaks about fluid and flexible inter-textual participation by many converts in their faith and liberation journey. Satyanathan Clarke puts this comprehensively,

> "In a situation where Dalits and Adivasis are unable to participate in the literacy-based world view of the Bible because of their semi-literacy or illiteracy, they live with and under oral versions of Biblical narratives that are corporately weaved together through the calculating and creative interpretations of their ears and eyes. Oral scriptures are open–ended and fluid; however, they have their origins in readings of the written word. And such oral scriptures perform in their ability to transform. This notion of transformation is native to oral cultures". (Clarke, 1999, 18)

7. 5. 2 The Construction of a new Community life and religious practices using Christian symbols, rituals and festivals

The new identity against the old identity reflects the experience of Indian converts arising from their reflection of Christian Scripture and the working of the Holy Spirit in and through this new believing community.

Shreiter would call this a process where the community is seen as theologians. The experience of the development of this kind of theology, especially in liberation models, has prompted others to,

"Define theology as the emancipatory praxis freeing an oppressed people. Theology then becomes also a pedagogical process liberating consciousness and inciting to action". (Shreiter, 1985, 17)

After conversion to the Christian faith, converts grew in the faith through worship and Bible study, and by adopting new symbols, rituals and festivals offered by the western church. The Christmas tree, Easter Eggs and the sharing of gifts through Santa is very much part of the Indian Christian's celebration of Christian festivals.

All the above songs in three sections points out that the lyrists have been well versed with biblical narratives. One can find that Christian concept of incarnation was beginning to find its place in their system of thinking. In these songs we find a growing redemption–centered theology - which however can be said to be a theology with small 't'. The Christmas pageant in the Indian Church with all the characters like Mary, Joseph, Angels, shepherds, the wise men, and a well-prepared manger with a small child in it is very common features of the celebration of the incarnation of Jesus Christ in India today. In the village context the celebration includes folk songs with dances and a communal meal.

In the writings of these songs there is an emerging contextual theology of the converts. There is a radical departure from the notion of caste Hinduism and its formularies. Though the Christian community in India continues to live in the face of Indian culture and history, the human experience is now continuing to express itself contextually through Christian scripture and tradition in their new psychological, social and religio-cultural conditions. There is an ongoing comparison in all these songs of their experience of the past in the context of their present experience in Christian faith. There is emerging a new personality, communal experience, social location and social change resulting in the formation of a new ethnic and religio-cultural identity.

The general dissatisfaction with the Hindu caste system forced the movement of people into a religion where God incarnate shared by the Christian faith was an inviting, friendly and compassionate God. It was an experience of redemption characterized by the

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conviction of their radical transformation. Jesus Christ was brought into their culture and the word of God reached these people for whom Jesus Christ had a saving meaning.

The inculturation of Christmas pageant is seen in Indian Christians celebration of Christmas with elaborate light decorations, almost comparable with the Hindu festival of the light (Dipawali) in India. Jesus as the true light finds its meaning in the traditional understanding of good that had overcome evil.

The question based on cognitive theory is generally raised in cultural anthropology: How do the villagers perceive the message of the Christmas pageant? What did such words as "God", "Jesus" and "incarnation" mean to them?

There is always an issue raised about Syncretism in the Christian faith. This is based on the way Indians organize their conceptual world. In their worldview there is only one kind of life, whether it is in gods, people, animals or plants. The only difference between them is one of degree. Gods have more life than people, and people have more than animals, just as these are reborn as gods. And gods appear frequently on earth as incarnations to help humans defeat the forces of evil. Hence in Hinduism there is no solitary throne for Jesus. But Jesus is accepted as the one incarnate god with many other incarnate gods or 'Avataras'.

Indeed the Indian converts from a Hindu background were familiar with the concept of incarnation. In Hinduism the term 'Avatar' is used for incarnation. This term is used for Jesus in many songs. For Hindus incarnation or 'Avtar' takes place at the time when the world faces a decline of righteousness (dharma) and the rise of evil.

But as we go through the songs there is a clear growing distinctive understanding about Jesus as Messiah, Redeemer, who brings Salvation to the world. In the liberative praxis Jesus is placed as the exclusive Son of God in the above songs who preferentially supports the poor and downtrodden.

Conversion to Christianity made a deep psychological impact on the converts. Through faith and allegiance to Jesus the incarnate the converts were declaring their liberation from the psychological, cultural and social oppression of the Hindu caste system. They found this Messiah a friend and liberator of the alienated and depressed people. The converts were quick to encapsulate the teachings of Jesus.

The converts coming from depressed communities who now call themselves 'Dalit' find it important to draw liberative praxis by understanding the common ground between the Biblical world and the Dalit world. They apply the hermeneutics of retrieval to approach the biblical text with hope and aspiration.

The Dalit Christians therefore today in India would not like to relate the incarnate Jesus with any Hindu concept or mythology. They use liberative hermeneutics in their quest to see the inter-relatedness between the Biblical and Dalit worlds. This seeks to read the texts of the Bible in transaction with grassroots and other subaltern communities. Dalit hermeneutics seeks to concentrate on the integral liberation of the Dalits themselves. Some of the key interpretative questions raised by the scholars or people who are engaged in Dalit hermeneutics are:

> Are the actual and official preaching from the pulpits or platform vibrating with the biblical claims of God's bias in favour of the people thrown to the periphery?

> Would the eschatological promise of the biblical texts be mesmerizing agents, persuading the Dalits to forget the present phase of apparently inconclusive pain and suffering due to oppression?

> Is biblical orientation other-worldly?

> Is the jubilant song of the exodus people after crossing the oppressive Egyptian boundary a meaningful composition?

Could the silence of Job in the thick of wretched conditions be the source of inspiration for activating the legitimate wrath of Dalits against their enemies?

Should the suffering servant of God nakedly crucified in public be the model of liberation to the Dalits who are 'crucified' day in and day out, openly and subtly?"

Dalits also use the idea of retrieval in their hermeneutics to gain their loss energy by using the Psalmist's experience and the book of laments. This idea is much earlier identified by R.H. Pfeiffer when he comments on Psalms in general and laments in particular,

"The intense emotions of these earnest souls, their longing for God's presence, their joyful faith, flaming hatred, agonizing doubt, black hours of despair, all find expression in the Psalter. This book is the voice of those humble believers whose virile hope, in spite of despair, and unyielding tenacity in the midst of reverse, has kept Judaism alive and militant to the present day". (Pfeiffer, 1948, 620)

The Indian worldview, which treats all human experience as part of a single integrated domain, is closer in many ways to the worldview of the early Christians than is the sharp division the western world makes between the sacred and secular. The western world has two distinct conceptual domains in narrating the story of Christ's birth. The sacred one is the Biblical characters e.g. Mary, Joseph, Angels, wise men, manger and child Jesus and the secular one is Santa, reindeer, stockings. Somehow while introducing Christmas to Indians, missionaries could not separate two different cognitive domains 'sacred' and 'secular'. In contemporary India Christmas celebration has become a big commercial event.

Christian sacraments, mainly the 'Lord's Supper' or 'Holy Communion', remembering the suffering and death of Jesus on the cross, play a vital role in uniting the believers in the faith of Christianity. The vernacular language of liturgy has enabled converts to contextualize their faith understanding of Christianity. The cross and suffering has a

special meaning in contemporary Dalit theology. For the Dalit Christian, on the cross Jesus was broken, crushed, split, torn and was revealed as a Dalit.

The rituals of Baptism, Confirmation and Marriage are religiously exercised and given importance. This public affirmation of the radical change of religious identity continue to be seen as an important facet of Christian life in India.

7. 5. 3 The Indian Church and continuing Missional Challenges - the growing disparity between settled Indian Church denominations and growing missionary movements and new congregations

It is important to note that, in spite of various government policies of uplifting the depressed communities in India, the caste stigma continues to humiliate millions of people in India. There is a strong Dalit movement in India. Though there is no Amebedkar today amongst them, strong voices continue to refute the caste hegemony of Indian Hindu Society.

In the missional context: The Indian Church is criticized for failing to grasp the meaning of being justified by grace. The historic Churches in India are met with a stiff challenge from the growing evangelical Churches in India and South Africa. This in fact is a world Phenomena. Evangelical and Dalit movements in the Church can be considered as counter-movements in the post colonial era of the Church.

The Indian Church has suffered in post colonial India a two-fold crisis:

Firstly, it has to do with the leadership and structures of the Church. The leadership was in the hands of upper caste converts from Brahmin backgrounds till 1970 and the only change now is that some Bishops in the Churches belong to Dalit backgrounds. The organizational structure of the Church of North India is hierarchical, like a pyramid governed predominantly by ordained Ministers. The consequences can be seen in high-handedness, authoritarianism, monopolization of public resources and the temptations of corruption and nepotism that have at times and in places become common realities.

Dr. Ambedkar had raised this issue in his conversation with Bishop Picket in 1935 and pointed out,

> "Many missionaries had compromised with the Brahmins, giving Hinduism a respect it did not deserve. Instead of listening to Brahmins they should have, like Jesus, been attuned to the cries of the oppressed... and the missionaries had not adequately adapted their methods to the Indian social order and had, thus, produced leaders with little social conscience". (Calpham, August 2006, 30)

However, the idea of social transformation is not absent from the thoughts of the present leaders of the Indian Church. The unabated violence against Dalit and indigenous people are a common feature in contemporary India.

The contemporary Missionary movement emerging with the help of American-based Churches in post colonial India is received both within and outside the Church with reservations. The historic Church in India devoted its energy to maintaining the Church structures and not in the mission of the Church.

Patrick Joshua in the Mission Conference organized jointly by Churches and Missionary organizations in India points out the importance of moving from maintenance to mission by the Church in India.

> "The church should create mission awareness … and arrange mission exposure for her members. He further points out that 90% of our evangelistic efforts are carried out among Christians in our country… more than 90% of our income is spent on Christians themselves". (Pradhan, 2006, 157-158)

In chapter one of this thesis I raised the concern about the inability of the Church to use the testimony of these converts for mission praxis to draw other victims of casteism in India into an experience of liberation in Jesus Christ. After conversion eventually converts have created for themselves a comfort zone within the Church boundaries.

Emphasis has been more on maintaining their new-found Church structures. Fr Monodeep Daniel, a clergyman of the Church of North India, records in the St. Thomas Unity Lecture in the UK the following two reactions from within the established Church as a sign of hope and a seed for future mission in India.

> "The first was 'A People's Synod' in February 2006 at St Paul's, Church Compound, Raipur, in India that was the direct result of the Chattisgarh Christian Convention. Some well known names of the CNI took part in a very well attended gathering. In conclusion – in terms of the whole lecture – this People's Synod was said to exemplify 'the model of counter leadership within the Church'… and the second, 'the rise and growth of the Dalit Avatari group who refer to Jesus as the Dalit Avatar of God… this dynamic movement was started in 1984 in Western and central Uttar Pradesh with 4000 scattered Bhangi Christian villagers (Sweeper Caste Christian villagers). They sense pastoral neglect, have young adult leadership, have a longing for religion but steer clear of its institutional form. Father Daniel describes this 'Dalit Avatari Movement of liberated untouchable Bhangis as an exemplary model of alternative leadership outside the Church". (Clapham, August 2006, 30-31)

In India the depressed communities who are not Christian continue to have a quest for the meaning of their existence, for a just community and for hope and a future. The major challenge faced by the established Churches in India whose stories are rooted in the history of conversion as mentioned in this thesis is to tap into the yearnings of depressed communities in India and help move the conversation towards Jesus.

There is a growing concern in the wider Christian Evangelical circle raising questions about the compatibility of the established Church structures in meeting the missionary challenges in post colonial India.

Patrick Joshua who has worked in India in the missionary context of post colonial India presented his paper in a meeting of the leaders of the Churches and Missionary

Organizations in India from 25th -28th July 2005 to consider the theme 'Uniting in Christ's Mission: towards a United, Holistic, Evangelistic and Cross Cultural Mission'. He said,

> "The Christian population continues to grow in India…everyday 12000 new people are added to the Church. 200 new congregations are formed every week. The number of missionaries working in India was 548 in 1978 which rose up to 10243 in 1988 and now it is more than 50000 and a lakh of local evangelists. Mission in India as a whole is on the move for transformation among the grassroots level communities where the social upsurge towards a better and liberated life is becoming stronger. We, in missions, see very clearly that this transformation is moving from bottom to top". (Pradhan, 2006, 154)

Patrick also presented a case study of the Malto Tribal in Eastern Bihar; there were 10 lakhs of people in Malto in 1960 who are now reduced 80000 due to malnutrition, lack of health care and exploitation, illiteracy and deforestation etc. He points out that whenever people turn to Christ there is persecution of them in India. And yet the Church has to respond to this context. He speaks about the problems faced by new converts and congregations who have grown in their own contextual styles and emotional expression towards their newly-found God and the truth.

> "It is very hard to re-groove them to a traditional order of service which will choke the spirit and form of their worship and spiritual life. Unless there is full proof of a mutually accepted process of transition it will be very hard to help the new congregations to fit…". (Pradhan, 2006, 161)

Mr. V. M. Malviya who is working among Gujarati Tribal people in India succinctly describes the importance of reaching people who are neglected by the wider Indian community in the tribal areas in Chota Udaipur where people continue to live the primitive life style. For Malviya,

"The Gospel is predominantly a change agent which transforms the lives of people from within. The gospel restores basic human dignity and a sense of self-worth as it helps people to understand God the Creator and the Scriptures. The Gospel helps them to have a new life-style which embellishes their culture rather than destroying it". (Pradhan, 2006, 124)

7. 6 Conclusion

The story of the conversion of South African Indian Christians is rooted in the Indian history of conversion. After relocation as first or second generation Christians in South Africa as indentured labourers it would be very helpful for them to connect with their roots and the experiences of conversion of their forefathers through these lyrics. In peculiar circumstances caused by apartheid Indian Christians in South Africa have no connections with their cultural roots in India.

Converts in India underwent a profound encounter with Jesus Christ in the Bible. The lyrics composed by them speak about their profound discovery of a loving, caring and reconciling and just God. In these lyrics the powerful testimony of the converts can inspire South African Anglican Indian Christians in their ministry of reconciliation in South Africa.

The converts in India formed a new religious culture and ethnic identity in India as Indian Christians. They were beginning to get evolved in constructing and reconstructing a paradigm of Christian living with Christ like mind in a society in which many people continue to suffer with poverty and exploitation.

However some difficult questions are raised in terms of their role in the society as Indian Christians.

It is realized that they settled their life within the boundaries of the western Church system/structure. The Church provided them with a comfort zone which eventually had an adverse affect on the missional task of the Church.

They began to develop ghetto spirituality for themselves and therefore could not participate intelligently in the mission vision of the Church. There were problems in relation to leadership and lopsided mission priorities. The energy of the Church was diverted to maintain the Church, and the testimony of these converts could not be used intelligently for mission praxis.

It is pointed out that the structured Church failed to evolve converts to act as wounded healers for those people who continue to suffer injustices in society. This will be explained in more detail in the following chapter.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Converts as wounded healers – the challenges of the Ministry of Reconciliation and Healing for South African Indian Christians

8.1 Introduction

The lyrics composed by the converts as reflected upon in the previous chapter highlight the converts' insight and discovery of a God of compassion who had delivered them from a painful life in an unjust social and religious structure. The question is raised about how this experience becomes a key to a new way of living? What does this new way of living demand from a convert? A concern raised in the previous chapter is this: were converts encouraged to use their new way of life for mission praxis in India?

The same question applies in the South African context. Has the Anglican Church in South Africa been able to use the South African Indian Christian experience to meet the challenges of the ministry of reconciliation and healing in the post-apartheid South Africa?

Robert J. Shreiter in his book 'The Ministry of Reconciliation – Spirituality and Strategies': offers helpful suggestions to Christian believers to live as a resurrection people to guide the process of reconciliation in a violent and unjust society. By pointing to the Risen Lord as Victim and Reconciler, Shreiter in this book invites Christians to discern their role in the community as reconcilers. In various resurrection appearance stories, Jesus is seen to be encountering different characters, Mary Magdalene, disciples on the Road of Emmaus, the disciples on the upper room and the disciples on the seashore. The victim Jesus now restored to life in transfigured humanity heals, forgives and commissions his disciples to carry forth his mission to the whole world. The important point Shreiter makes about this appearances is:

> "Jesus appears as he needs to be seen. The purpose of appearances is not to make a point or to establish a fact. It is to heal, to reconcile". (Shreiter, 2000, 48)

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Shreiter says that,

> "Approaching the story in this manner gives us an unusual perspective on the appearances of Jesus, since We as latter-day disciples hope to discern some pattern for ourselves. The perspective taken here invites us to view the stories from the side of Jesus, the reconciled victim". (Schreiter, 2000, 22)

According to Shreiter the strategies on reconciliation require some measure of agreement: what and who need reconciliation? What will be the efficacious means of that reconciliation? And what will the final state of reconciliation will look like? Shreiter says that Mark Hay identifies eight such actors in the reconciliation process. These actors are: victims and survivors, wrongdoers, by-standers, victims and wrongdoers, dead, future generations, neighbours and God.

For Shreiter the Church's role in the reconciliation processes can be examined in two ways:

> "In terms of the resources it brings to the reconciliation process and in terms of the active role it plays in it…he further suggests that there are three resources in particular that should be considered…its message about reconciliation and the spirituality that flows out of it…the power of its ritual…its capacity to create communities of reconciliation". (Shreiter, 2000, 127)

8. 2 The Anglican Church And Indian Converts

In terms of Anglican ministry in South Africa questions are raised about the capacity of South African Indian Christians as a resource to meet the challenges of the ministry of reconciliation and healing in post apartheid South Africa. What message of reconciliation flows through their Christian life to the wider society? Do they have the capacity to create communities of reconciliation through their life, witness and service to the community?

In order to reflect on the above questions a further query is necessary. It is important to evaluate the way the Anglican Church has prepared Indian Christians to become a missional resource for the Church in South Africa. The second and third generation ex Anglican Christians in India (because in India the denominations have come together under the banner of the Church of South India and the Church of North India – accept American Methodist Church) are critical about the way the western Church has used and treated them. The emerging Dalit and Black theology are counter theologies in the face of Brahminic and Western theologies of the Church. They define the God of the Bible from their own experiences and from their own historical perspective.

If converts do not participate in the mission of Jesus in the ministry of reconciliation and healing, by challenging oppressive forces and supporting the marginalised, and if the Church fails to attune its members to use their experience of liberation as a key to a new way of living with the suffering Messiah for mission praxis, then even the legitimate call to repentance and new birth in Jesus Christ could be seen by others as a manipulation by the Church to use converts only for numerical Church growth.

In a personal capacity the conversion experience has had a major impact on the socio-religio-cultural identity of the converts resulting in the formation of a new ethnic identity. But there is a question to be asked about the spiritual growth/maturity of these converts in this new identity to be effective as a new resource in creating communities of reconciliation and healing in India and South Africa.

The personal growth of converts in the parochial life of the Church and in the development of ghetto spirituality - for example their grasp of the Church formularies through liturgy, catechism, rituals and understanding of western Christian mannerism - is found to be quite strong. However from a missional perspective their understanding of the mission of the Church and their role as converts did not show enough sign of spiritual growth and maturity. This has to do with the approach and the attitude with which Anglican Church received these converts.

The Anglican Church maintained a double standard in dealing with converts. The upper caste converts from Hinduism were given extra attention in comparison to the converts from lower and untouchable backgrounds in India and in South Africa. Hardly any efforts were made to prepare local Indian leadership from among the converts coming from depressed communities. The Indian converts were either guided by the western clergy or by some average Christian resources imported from India which happened to be the then British colony.

It was felt by the Church that upper caste converts had made more sacrifices by converting into Christianity and that they were more capable of running the Church. The converts from lower and untouchable backgrounds were considered to be a great liability for the Church, which diverted all its energy to maintain them. These converts were protected and guided either by the western clergy or by the upper-caste Christian leadership.

The Church was happy to exercise a paternalistic attitude in relation to converts from lower and untouchable backgrounds. The boundaries of Christian mission compounds/churches were created to maintain and hold these converts safely. Converts became quite content within these boundaries. Eventually their Christian worldview became restricted to a parochial Christian lifestyle in the Church. It resulted in their exclusion from the rest of the society. The Church became a comfort zone for them.

The Church allowed the Sanskrit culture or western culture to be perpetuated through Indian-Christian theology formulated by upper caste converts and a western understanding of the Church. The tradition of lower castes and their languages were not looked at seriously. Inculturation attempts have, by and large, evolved around the Sanskritic traditions of the Indian society. Hardly any interest was shown in the study of the little traditions or subaltern religions from which most of the converts came into Christian faith. It is only through the birth of the liberation "theology" and Dalit theology

that the attention of the Church has been drawn to the majority of these so-called converts coming from depressed communities in Christian faith.

This disparity within the Anglican Church in relation to converts has prevented the spiritual growth of converts from lower and untouchable backgrounds. It has also affected adversely the ongoing mission of the church in building communities of reconciliation and healing in a violent and unjust society where millions of people continue to live as oppressed and depressed communities.

These converts had a genuine conversion experience and the Church worked hard through its evangelical efforts to draw them closer to faith in Jesus Christ. It is the duty of the Church to help converts to realize the responsibilities and accountabilities attached to becoming followers of Jesus Christ. The converts after accepting faith in Jesus Christ have to grow and mature and understand their missional role as Disciples of Christ and to learn to live as a resurrection people.

The Anglican Church had not promoted amongst converts the spiritual thinking that they could become 'wounded healers' in their given context. Instead of using their testimony for mission praxis the Church diverted most of its energy towards maintaining its structure and polity rather than doing mission.

The term 'wounded healer' in this thesis is not borrowed from the Henry J.M. Nouwen's book The Wounded healer. However Nouwen offers some profound theological insights by highlighting the relevance of the suffering of Jesus for the liberation and freedom of the nuclear man. His focus on ministry in a dislocated world for a rootless generation and to a hopeless man by a lonely minister as a wounded healer is of great value for the ministers in the Church.

The term 'wounded healers' in this thesis has emerged from the story of the converts who had lived a wounded life under the exploitation and oppression in the Hindu caste culture in India and during the apartheid period in South Africa. The meaning of this phrase is

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rooted in socio-psychological conditions of the converts before and after their conversion into Christianity. They carried with them the wounds of humiliation of Hindu casteism in India and racial discrimination during apartheid in South Africa. The concept 'wounded healer' in this thesis is used to raise the missional profile of the converts who are located in the local parishes. It is suggested that healing experience of the converts could be used effectively for mission praxis of the Church in their local context.

The term 'wounded healer' is also used in this chapter to highlight the impact of religious conversion on the cultural identity of the converts into Christianity. To a very great extent Christianity has provided converts an opportunity to heal their wounds. The message of love and equality emerging from the teachings of the gospel of Jesus has helped them to experience socio-spiritual healing. Their journey into the Christian faith enabled converts to reconstruct their identity. This journey also offered them an opportunity to reconfigure their lives. In Christianity they became psychologically a healthy community. This new experience which became the key to a new way of living should provide them the energy and strength conscientiously to participate in healing and restoring the lives of the suffering people around them in the society. This understanding of suffering must help them to be the disciples who walk with the suffering Jesus in society and live out the resurrected life of Jesus by instilling hope among hopeless and suffering people.

8. 3 The Anglican Church is not beyond reproach

There were serious flaws in the ways and means used by the Anglican Church at large to accommodate converts into the Christian fold. There were serious contradictions between knowing Jesus Christ and living Jesus Christ. There were contradictions between the precepts preached and those practiced by the Church.

The mission motivation in the Anglican Church in South Africa to work amongst Indians was lukewarm. Apartheid policy gave a further blow to the spirit of the Indians. Indian congregations remained isolated from the rest of the racial groupings in the Anglican Church.

The ethnic South African and South African Indian converts have many similarities of experience in their faith journey into Christianity. The Anglican Church has not made serious efforts to motivate the ethnic South African and South African Indians to use their stories for energetic mission praxis in South Africa.

The Anglican Church as a propagator of Christianity and converts as recipients of the gospel message have journeyed together for more than a century in South Africa. Their Christian journey centres around the hope Jesus has given to the world through his suffering and resurrection and through commissioning his disciples to continue this task of sharing hope and redemption. Shreiter speaks about long-standing spiritual practice in terms of a Christian way of dealing with suffering. He points out the importance of understanding the suffering that people are undergoing and consequently the same suffering that takes marks of a discipleship (walking with Jesus in the suffering of the people).

> "…The first practice creates a kind of inner, spiritual union in suffering…the second practice creates identification in action". (Shreiter, 2000, 5)

However it must be acknowledge that the Anglican Church has worked in a very complex socio-cultural milieu both in India and South Africa. Indian and ethnic African people come from a complex cultural background. In post-apartheid South Africa the Anglican Church is beginning to experience multi-racial memberships and particularly Indians and ethnic Africans in the parochial life of the Anglican Church. However there was very little outcome of their ministry in terms of the outreach and missional activities by the Indian and ethnic African parishes. This lapse is attributable to a number of factors:

8.3.1 The symbiotic relationship between Indian converts and the Anglican Church

In chapter six I have already discussed the motives of mass conversion, which were based on socio-psychological needs. The Anglican missionaries were quick to respond in their desire to affect the numerical growth of the Church. For the lower caste and out caste the

church was an escape route from perpetual degradation and dehumanization in Hinduism. They depended on the church for their growth, protection and prosperity.

The attitude of the Church towards converts from a lower caste and outcaste background was one of sympathy and paternalism. The lower caste and outcaste people were willing to accept this attitude to receive worldly benefits from the Church.

Wilson, a contemporary Dalit theologian (whose roots are in these conversions) in India, writes that the paternalistic attitude of the Church has failed to evolve these converts in shaping their future. This has led the converts to remain perpetually dependent on the mission grants for their survival.

> "On the one hand, all Dalits are socially segregated by Hindu society, on the other hand they have been culturally alienated by Christian missions who made them passive and dependent, waiting both for the salvation Christ gives and for help from a paternalistic Church, instead of being active in shaping their own future". (Jayakumar, 1999, 271)

People had land but no money. A well known saying in Africa goes,

> "When the missionaries came, we had the land and they had the Bible. They said: 'let us pray', and when we opened our eyes after the prayer, they had the land and we had the Bible". (Kilian, 1993, 37)

This shows that to some extent missionaries were working in the interest of colonials by controlling the poor in the name of religion and with the power of money.

The attitude of the Church towards converts from the upper caste was strategic. The Anglican Church wanted to use the upper caste for Church growth. However, the upper caste used this golden opportunity to be in alliance with the elite western society of that

time. Through the Church they advanced in education and gained higher secular and religious positions both in the Church and the secular world.

8.3. 2 Adaptation and Inculturation in the Anglican Church

The Anglican Church practiced a twofold stance in relation to the cultural backgrounds of converts. The first stance was to demonize all that was in the previous culture of the converts from the lower and outcaste. And the second stance was inculturation through Hindu Vedic philosophies in which the upper caste were well-versed.

The Anglican Church in general had a superiority complex over other religions and culture. The Anglican Church was quick to mould converts into the Anglican tradition. Since the converts were suffering with an inferiority complex due to their caste/class backgrounds in their previous religion, they willingly subjected themselves to such inculturation. The converts were quick to adopt Anglican rituals, and missionary priests were meticulous in teaching them the Anglican ways. This training is reflected powerfully even today among senior members of the Anglican Church. The externals of the Church ritual speak louder than the Gospel mandate for believers in the Anglican Church.

The Anglican Church made mistakes in the inculturation of Indian converts. Upper caste converts and western missionaries formulated Indian Christian theology based on Hindu Vedic philosophies. The Anglican Church showed no interest in the little traditions from which the majority of converts had come into Christian faith. This gave rise to Dalit theology, which criticises the Church today for perpetuating a Brahmanic theology of upper caste in the Church. This has been highlighted in chapter three of this thesis.

8. 3. 3 The disparity in relationships with converts in the Anglican Church

In chapter three I have pointed out that Anglican Church showed disparity in its accommodation of upper caste/upper class converts and converts from lower/poor and outcaste backgrounds. The majority of Indian converts in the Anglican Church in South Africa have come from poor class and low caste indentured backgrounds. These masses suffered under an upper caste dominated religion and society in India. However even in

South Africa as indentured labourers they continued to suffer. In South Africa Brahmans were replaced by white/western people. They had to survive under the domination of the white/western race.

There have hardly been any Indian priests trained in South Africa. The first clergy from a South African Indian background, Fr. Bernard Sigamoney, was ordained priest in 1922. He eventually moved to spend his entire life in Transvaal. The first indigenous ordinand in Natal in 1935 was Jacob Christopher Davis who was ordained priest in 1942. Only after 82 years of Indian presence was the Anglican Church able to produce one indigenous priest.

And when Indian leadership came forward after a long time, they were kept under the supervision of white clergy. Missionaries had promoted the superiority complex of western civilization over Indian leadership. It was felt that,

> "Only western man (*sic*) was man in the full sense of the word; he was wise and good, and members of other races, in so far as they became westernised, might share in this wisdom and goodness. But western man was the leader, and would remain for a very long time, perhaps for ever". (Killan, 1993, 39)

It took a long time to establish Indian congregations in South Africa. There are a few Indian congregations in South Africa, but they suffer from a lack of proper leadership.

8. 3. 4 Indians continue to remain insecure

Indentured Indians suffered an insecure future in South Africa. It is important to differentiate the circumstances of the passenger Indian community and the indentured Indian community. The passenger Indians who prospered in this country during the colonial period and continued to do so even in the post apartheid times must account for their role in eradicating the sufferings of local natives in South Africa. It is not wrong to say that the presence of affluent Indians sits uncomfortably in the psyche of some natives in South Africa.

However it is a pity that sometimes the poverty amongst Indian people belonging to an indentured background is not highlighted. In Chatsworth and Lenasia I encountered some really poor Indian Christians during eight years of ministry as an Anglican Priest. But in my ministry to native Africans I am compelled to say that their plight in their own country is beyond comprehension. They need total attention in the new South Africa for reconstruction of their new healthy life and identity which was denied them for so long.

In post-apartheid South Africa Indians live with a minority complex. Many Indians continue to live in South Africa with insecure feelings. The phrase commonly used 'We were not white enough to be white and now we are not black enough to be black' speaks about the tension with which Indians live in the new South Africa. And it is this area of insecurity that requires immediate attention in the ministry of the South African Anglican Indian Christian. By now it is their own nation and they have to work together in building new South Africa even to the extent till it pinches them.

But as the nation moves forward a large number of professionals and community workers today are beginning to feel at ease with one another. There is a growing sense of accountability by many skilled people towards supporting the building of a native leadership. My own two sons, one an engineer and the other a business analyst in Johannesburg, refuse to leave South Africa for the sake of giving back what they have received from this nation. Indians and ethnic South Africans are beginning to work together in nation building. Converts from an Indian background in the Anglican Church in South Africa have an important missional role for nation building.

There are growing challenges faced by the South African poor masses that continue to suffer from the poverty and illnesses of various kinds. South African Anglican Christian both Indians and Native Christians can use their background of suffering to the benefit of those who are suffering even today in the new South Africa.

8. 3. 5 Lack of Mission Motivation

The Anglican Church at large initially showed no interest in the Indian population. In chapter four I have discussed in detail the bias of local western Christians and officials against the Indian population.

> "Among the whites there existed a strong anti-Indian feeling, and initially locals withheld their support for the mission". (Denis, 1995, 163)

Ministry and mission to the Indians did not seem to capture the imagination of the Anglican Church. In 1918 Bishop Baines summed up the position saying,

> "If the primary purpose of the Indian mission is to evangelize the non-Christian Indians in Natal, of whom there are so many, than we have to come to a point where we are perilously near failing to fulfill this purpose". (Denis, 1995, 164)

However, eventually the Anglican Church has done well in evolving Indian converts into an Anglican worshiping community life. In that way the parochial Anglican spirituality and maturity in understanding Anglican ways is quite visible among Indian converts. But the Anglican Church and converts suffer from the lack of mission motivation. Their negligible engagements with the wider society beyond their parochial life are a matter of great concern. They are not missional in their approach. Anglicans are more maintenance-conscious.

The Anglican Church has to guide converts to deal with the whole of their life with their new ethnic identity as Christian people in society. It has to uncover the converts' deepest sense of longing and purpose in their new faith in relation to the communities around them. The Anglican Church has to watch closely how converts perceive, how they think, what is their stewardship of life and their attitudes in the new faith? The church has to view how converts are relating to other depressed communities, and how the

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incarnational teachings through the birth, person and work of Jesus, His crucifixion and the gift of the Holy Spirit is implied in their relationship with the wider community.

The Anglican Church has to make sure that converts should not become an exclusive, insular and withdrawn community in the society. The incarnational presence of the Church in society is one of the major concerns for emerging theologians from among the converts in the Church. Buthelezi one of the Black theologians observes,

> "The kind of missionary pietism that separated the religious life from the flesh and blood life here and now- either by isolating converts from a lost society by bringing them into the safety of the mission compound, or by projecting blessedness into a hereafter to the neglect of the present day needs – this kind of piety, argues Buthelezi, drew a quite false dichotomy". (Parratt, 1995, 165)

Very little effort has been made by Anglican Church to encourage converts to use their background for creative and energetic mission praxis for doing mission effectively in South Africa. Converts both from Indian and ethnic African background come from a wounded history. They together can play the role of 'wounded healers' in the society. The Anglican Church has not made any concerted efforts to use the testimony of Indian people for the benefit of the missional life of the Church at large. In this sense from the perspective of their missional role there is a lack of spiritual growth and maturity among the converts. Maintenance continues to play a major role in the life of the Anglican Church. It is high time that converts began to shape their own future in the life of the Church as a missional community. From maintenance to mission ought to be the way forward for converts in the Anglican Church in South Africa. Indian and ethnic Anglican Congregations are full of resources in doing mission effectively provided the church motivates the members to reach out and go beyond the parochial boundaries of the Church.

8. 4 South African Indian Anglican Christians – a way forward

It is more than ten years now since South Africa was freed from the monster called apartheid. There has been a heavy cost paid by Christians and others emancipating themselves from the injustices of the apartheid period. There were some white clergy, political leaders and ordinary people who declared apartheid an unjust system and fought against it. After an initial silence the Church came out forcefully against apartheid rule. They continue to play a pivotal role in motivating local congregations.

The victims of apartheid however were the ethnic African people, Coloured people and Indians. Today the second and third generation Indians in South Africa are quite progressive in the secular world. The South African Anglican Indians are not a very rich community but the majority of them live quite comfortably. There are a few Indians who are still backward and poor financially. But their suffering compared to the ethnic South Africans is far less even today.

In the new South Africa communities which were segregated on racial grounds are now gradually intermingling. Local parishes are now experiencing different races worshipping together. Post-apartheid South Africa has opened enormous opportunities to South African Anglican Christians from different races to work towards building the nation.

8. 5 Ethnic African and South African Indians – interrelated experiences

It is important to observe some common experiences and issues faced by both Indians and ethnic South Africans during colonialism in South Africa. Both communities suffered injustices from the colonials. They came from poor and oppressed backgrounds. Both faced humiliations, as Indians were called 'Coolies' and Africans 'Kaffirs'. They both have undergone fear, dehumanisation, hunger and insult. They both carry the 'wounds' of past humiliations. Faith in Jesus Christ to a very great extent has helped them in healing their wounds. Today they are more competent to understand the wounds of their people. They are required together to play their role as the 'wounded healers' in the society.

Indians have experienced a double dose of racism in their journey from India to South Africa. In India they suffered from Casteism and in South Africa racism. Indians have an edge in formulating a relevant Christian mission paradigm and theology of mission together with South African ethnic Christians. Together they can continue to share the message of liberation and reconciliation to those who continue to live a weary and burdened life in new South Africa. Together they can participate with others in the construction and building of this nation.

Both Indians and Africans in South Africa have struggled to move upward both socially and economically. Christianity did offer an opportunity for growth but always kept them under the domination of western culture and western ways. The control over them by the western church was through the dominant theologies of the western Church. The superiority complex of western culture always suppressed the emergence of the little traditions from which the converts had come into Christianity. The theology of the church had been developed from the perspective of the rich and dominant church of the west.

Both Indians and ethnic Africans in South Africa should evolve in formulating a contextual theology. It should be an incarnational theology. Their presence and engagement with people in South Africa should reflect the purpose of the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Their testimony about their own backgrounds must deliver hope to the people of the new South Africa.

8. 6 Indian Dalit Theology and South African Black Theology

Dalit and Black theologies have different geographical contexts. Dalit theology has not been popularised among South African Indian Christians as yet. However they both share common experiences that have affected their lives adversely. They both are rooted in liberation theologies. The motivation for Black theology in South Africa is located in racial discrimination against black people in the United Sates. Dalit theology has emerged in the context of Caste discrimination in India.

Both theologies negate the dominant western theology. Both theologies are people theologies. Both theologies are concerned with liberation, and the material conditions of the life of oppressed and poor people. Both theologies are thinking theologies from the standpoint of poor and oppressed people.

Black theology and Dalit theology in South Africa must draw their strength from one another in the spirit of 'Ubuntu'. The spirit of interdependence between Black and Dalit theologies can help the native ethnic and Indian South African membership to work together in building the new South Africa. A transformed South Africa is the call of the day. The process of transformation will become much easier if different races, particularly Indian and ethnic South African people, could draw closer to one another to live as a resurrection people in South Africa.

The issues and themes that run through both the theologies have great relevance for South Africans in general and particularly for Indian and ethnic African communities. Manas Buthelezi's in his attempt to distinguish two approaches to indigenous theology in South Africa: the ethnographic and anthropological observes,

> "Black theology is nothing but a methodological formula whose genius consists in paying tribute to the fact that theological honesty cannot but recognize the peculiarity of the black man's situation…The realization of our authentic humanity as black people does not consist merely in reconstructing the old patterns of a past theological and sociological world-view, but in gaining access as black people t that which constitutes the wholeness of life in the present day world." (Moore, 1973, 34)

Manas Buthelezi points out,

> "There is the danger that the African past may be romanticized and conceived in isolation from the realities of the present. Yet this 'past' seen as worldview is

nothing more than a historical abstraction of 'what once was'". (Nakah, 2002, 120)

It is important to raise the existential questions faced by people in new South Africa. The converts in the Anglican Church in South Africa need to make a response to these questions through their faith experience. An anthropological approach will help in dealing with the contemporary human situation in which an ordinary South African person is living and struggling. Again the words o Manas Buthelezi can be helpful.

"The starting point for theological reflection is the existential situation in which the Gospel finds man. Just as one needs to take man's sinful state seriously in order to grasp the depth of the forgiving love of God, one must also take seriously the decisive factors that shape the mode of man's daily existence in order to see in perspective the direction as well as the ultimate fruition of the formation of the new man in Christ through the word of God." (More, 1973, 33)

I am making the following observations as these observations have guided my ministry in Lenasia. I strongly believe that there is enormous potential for ethnic Anglican South African and Indian South African Anglican Christians to work together as resource to create communities of healing in post apartheid South Africa.

8. 6. 1 Identity and Selfhood

Manas Buthelezi in his reflection on the theological meaning of true humanity affirms that

"Man's elementary possession in this world is *mutatis mutandis* his 'self'. He has an in alienable right to be himself in the way that he wants. The right to selfhood is elementary to man's humanity, and is one with his moral accountability." (Moore, 1973, 93)

Both Indians and native Africans have faced violence in different forms. Shreiter in his book 'Reconciliation – Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order' speaks about

the problematic dimension of the reconciliation process in a shifting social order. For Shreiter reconciliation is not only a matter of healing memories and receiving forgiveness but also about changing the structures in the society that provoked, promoted and sustained violence. Apart from bringing to knowledge the various forms of violence, he speaks about

> "The psychic sorts of violence that wreak havoc on a person's self–concept or self-esteem: Racism is a particularly virulent form of this violence wherein a group is told over and over again this it is inferior to some other group. How are we to confront these kinds of violence and the suffering they cause? How are we delivered from them?". (Shreiter, 1999, 30)

Shreiter suggests that we need to encounter ourselves through the stories we tell about ourselves and to others. We need to recover and embrace a redeeming narrative, which negate the narratives that insinuate its way into our individual and collective psyches by coiling itself around our most basic senses of security and self.

> "To remedy this sense of vulnerability and to avoid perishing in fear, we need to construct and reconstruct for ourselves a sense of safety and a sense of selfhood". (Shreiter, 1999, 31)

Both Dalit and Black theologies attempt to discover who they really are in light of the teachings of Jesus Christ. Dalit theology in India has a clear focus on their identity in the face of caste-ridden Hinduism. K. Wilson, a leading Dalit theologian, says,

> "Dalits must know who they are, who they were and whom they intend to become". (Prabhakar, 1988, 48)

Bonganjalo Goba in his book 'An agenda for Black Theology – Hermeneutics for social change' raises question 'who we are' and makes a theological assessment by describing,

"As the oppressed community, we have to continue to examine and understand the forces which have brought about our oppression. Ours is a history characterized by struggle against oppression…Theology as part of the black Christian communal praxis is a theology confronted by many odds: illiteracy, malnutrition, poverty, and black anger endangered by the destructive policies of separate development." (Goba, 1988, 21-22)

Black theology is critical of western theology. They asked for their black identity under the racial discrimination of 'white people' during apartheid. They asked questions about their role in a white-value-based South Africa. Black theologians, for example Allan Boesak, affirm that,

"Black theology believes that it is possible to recapture what was sacred in the African community long before the white people came: solidarity, respect for life and humanity and community". (Parrat, 1995, 26)

Dalit theologians interpret the gospel of Jesus as negating the conditions that prevent man becoming human and believe that the gospel of Jesus unfolds the inherent goodness and capacity of human nature.

8. 6. 2 Poverty and suffering; liberation and wholeness of life

Both in Dalit and Black theologies the theme of poverty and suffering occurs over and over again. Both theologies see God as liberator and invoke God to restore oppressed humanity. Both theologies call for human dignity, equality and social justice. Both theologies comprehend and describe the God of the Bible as the one who has come to distribute gifts to His children who are poor and suffering, captive and blind and oppressed. God is looked at as the God who provides wholeness of life to His children.

Nirmal a Dalit theologian says,

> "For Dalit theology pain and pathos is the beginning of knowledge. For the sufferer: more certain than any principle, more certain than any proposition, more certain than any thought and more certain than any action is his/her pain". (Clark, 1999, 46)

For most of the Dalit theologians, Dalit theology is,

> "Liberation theology entailing people's participation in pain, hardship, bitterness but eventually it is a theology of hope for there is the Promised Land. There is the land flowing with milk and honey". (Prabhakar, 1988, 33)

Dalit communities in India have undergone a long history of pain and humiliation under the Hindu caste system.

Black theologians have to struggle to regain their human dignity in the racist regime in South Africa. Their suffering is identified in military coups, oppression, exploitation, poverty and disease in their own country. The Black theologian Boesak in his book 'Farewell to Innocence' observes,

> "Being a theology of the poor, Black Theology seeks to focus on them not as marginal people, but to bring into their lives a new understanding of their liberation in Jesus Christ. It seeks to transform heir blackness from its peripheral existence to the centrality of joyous life in accordance with the gospel – precisely where Jesus has placed it. It seeks to bring the gospel as a relevant message to people who have lost their self respect, who are denied human dignity and who are trying to come to grips with a thousand dehumanizing facets of life." (Boesak, 1977, 19)

For Boesak,

> "Blackness means more than colour…it points mere colour to the suffering and struggles of the descendents of all enslaved and colonized people". (Nakah, 2002, 78)

Boesak sees Black theology as liberation theology. For him the God of the Bible is not the God preached by the white people. For him God of the Bible

> "Is totally and completely different from the God whites have for so long preached to blacks. The God of the Bible is the God of liberation rather than oppression, a God of justice rather than injustice, a God of freedom and humanity rather than enslavement and subservience, a God of love, righteousness and community rather than hatred, self interest and exploitation". (Boesak, 1977, 15)

Dalit and Black theologians affirm that life and religion, the physical and the spiritual are one and cannot be separated. In Buthelezi's words,

> "The passport to the place of receiving God's gifts is opportunity in education, employment and general development. To deny a person these opportunities is to displace him from his God-given place; it is to alienate him from wholeness of life". (Nakah, 2002, 129)

Shreiter in his quest of redeeming narrative to overcome suffering points to Christianity which

> "Addresses the question of how to suffer and how to regain our humanity? It offers a larger narrative to which we might connect our own, and it offers a memory that can serve as the framework to rebuild the shattered one we have". (Shreiter, 1999, 39)

8. 6. 3 Power, Community and Church

In both Dalit and Black theologies power is interpreted as a counter-force against Brahaminism in India and Racism in South Africa. The Church is looked upon as a community of faith and a community of love. The marginal, the suffering, the poor and the weak form a Body of Christ contrary to the Church of Christ of the powerful white people. Both theologies locate power among the oppressed. The power is essentially human and to share this power with others is to be fully human. Both theologies emphasise the need that the victims should raise voice against injustice. The African people should not be ashamed of their blackness but let their black identity create a positive attitude and new way of life.

Bonganjalo Goba while discussing the praxis of black theological reflection highlights the need for communal praxis. For him,

> "The quest for theological relevancy is a quest to move away from the captivity of the white theological establishment to a theology which is involved in the everyday struggle for liberation in South African context." (Goba, 1988, 43)

Bonganjalo Goba's definition sums up profoundly the power, community and the Church as institutions of healing. He defines this healing as,

> "That manifestation of the liberating presence of the grace and the spirit of God promoting and generating wholeness, Those creative presences of the liberating spirit of God fostering human relationships especially that are committed to change and social justice". (Nakah, 2002, 133)

The emphasis in both theologies is on communal praxis and the existential realities in which human beings live.

8. 6. 4 God and Christ

Both theologies speak about the suffering and saving God. God is liberator, a just and righteous God. Arvind Nirmal a Dalit theologian expresses in his theological journey the knowledge of God and proposes that

> "It is precisely in and through the weaker, the downtrodden, the crushed, the oppressed and the marginalized that God's saving glory is manifested or displayed. This is because brokenness belongs to the very being of God. He is one with the broken. He suffers when his people suffer. He dies in his people's death and he rises again in their resurrection. He weeps when they weep and laughs when his people laugh". (Prabhakar, 1978, 82)

Jesus Christ identifies with the weak, the outcaste. Jesus is the motivating factor for social action. Sigzibo Dwane says,

> "What makes the life of the man from Galilee Redemptive is the fact that it is God who suffers with him as one of the outcastes and oppressed". (Nakah, 2002, 136)

Both theologies look into the full humanity of Jesus Christ. The incarnation is connected to God's intention to identify with weak, suffering and pain-bearing human beings. God in Jesus Christ is seen as a God who has a preferential option for the poor and oppressed.

8. 7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have highlighted that the Anglican Church could have used the testimony of converts more effectively for appropriate mission praxis. I have highlighted the common experience of both native and Indian African in terms of suffering from racism in South Africa.

I have also tried to relate the African experience with the Indian experience and have proposed that they should work towards formulating a composite culture of service to the wider community in South Africa. They should imply their testimony of liberation and

freedom in Jesus Christ by participating in building the new South Africa. In the next chapter I will elaborate this possibility by sharing a case study.

CHAPTER NINE

Lenasia – A Hub of Cultures and Faiths
Ministry and Mission – South-to-South Partnership
Building capacity and participating in the Ministry of Reconciliation
'Sadbhavana Griha' – (An abode of Good Feelings and Love)

9. 1 Introduction

Indian people in South Africa make up a little more than 2.6% of the total population. The first group of Indian immigrants arrived in Natal in 1960. Some Christians with an Anglican Church background were among them. The migration of Indians to South Africa and the Ministry of the Anglican Church amongst Indian people is discussed in chapters four and five of this thesis. A table of names of Christians who came as indentured labourers from the research of Brain is attached as notes to this thesis. This list of names is helpful in locating the cities and states from which Indian Christian came as indentured labourers.

A large number of Indians are settled in the Natal area. Johannesburg boasts the presence of a small Indian Anglican community, predominantly in the township of Lenasia. Lenasia was built in 1954 as a result of the invention of apartheid in 1948, by which the laws of segregation of communities on the basis of race, 'the Group Areas Act', were implemented. The government began to move Indians out of their homes in Johannesburg onto to a piece of a farmland purchased from Mr. Lenze, about 25kms south of the city. This place became Lenasia.

The Christian community in Lenasia is a minority community in the midst of a 70% Muslim population and 20% Hindu/Tamil population. The Anglican Parish of Christ the Saviour at the time of my arrival had an average attendance of 30 to 40 members during Sunday worship services. Christians in Lenasia in terms of their Christian identity are quite a fragmented group. This 10% Christian community in Lenasia is distributed among

43 Christian fellowships. This fragmentation is further complicated as Christians living in Lenasia historically claim to be the early founders of the Churches in the Lenasia. There is also an attitude of superiority (over Christians coming from Durban to live in Lenasia in the post-apartheid period) shown by Christians who have lived in the Johannesburg area much longer. Those who have come from Durban are generally called Durbanite and looked down on at times. However this attitude in eventually changing as there is a big migration of Christians from Durban settling in Lenasia.

There are different cultures and religious traditions in Lenasia: among the Hindu people we find a large number of Tamils, a good number of Gujaratis and a very small number of Hindi speaking people from a North Indian background. There are many Hindu temples and many gods worshiped by Hindus in Lenasia. There are different sects and organizations such as the followers of Hindu Gurus e.g. Satya Sai Baba and Sirdi Sai. The school of Yoga: e.g. Brahmakumari (Raja Yoga), Mata Nirmala Devi (Sahaja Yoga) and modern religious movements e.g. Krishna Consciousness and Radhaswami, Swami Narayan and Anand Marg.

The Muslims are predominantly from the Sunni tradition, having a Mosque practically in every extension in Lenasia. The Muslim community is actively involved in their mercy acts through almsgiving and establishing Madrasas for new African converts for regular teaching apart from the growing mosques. All these religions are involved in community-building issues and building their mission beyond conventional methods.

The growing presence of native Africans and so-called coloured people is seen in Lenasia since the end of apartheid. The Zionist group is quite visible through groups of African ladies gathering in open fields under the trees. The presence of some coloured and native African memberships in the churches is giving a multi-racial look to the predominantly Indian congregations in Lenasia.

9. 2 Ministry and Mission – South-to-South Partnership – A strategic move by the World Church

In 1994 immediately after apartheid ended the Bishop (Peter Lee) of the Anglican Diocese of Christ the King invited the then General Secretary of the Church Mission Society (CMS), London Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali to visit Lenasia. The Anglican Parish of Lenasia is administered by the Diocese of Christ the King. At this visit Bishop Ali observed that the Anglican community in Lenasia could potentially through its ministry encourage cohesion and harmony among people of various faiths. After apartheid, issues of faith became an important concern for this rainbow nation. It was also suggested that someone from the southern hemisphere should initiate such a ministry. CMS assisted the Diocese of Christ the King to contact me through the Church of North India to initiate this ministry and mission in Lenasia.

It is important to note that this South-to-South programme is also realized against a background of division between North and South not only in terms of race, climate or geographical division but also political, economic, religious and cultural differences. This South-to-South programme envisaged the experiencing of the 'oneness of humankind', and a paradigm shift. The Mission and ministry were not based on missionary sympathy. It was to promote a 'partners in mission' concept; sharing of resources as partners in mission in the global Church. The South-to-South programme is also a realization that pluralism in the South where uniformity cannot be imposed by the North needs a different theological and missiological approach. The South-to-South programme raise questions for the Church at large; whether a church planted by the efforts of the North through colonial rules has its home in Africa, Asia and other countries of South. It is in this context that a Praxis model of theology in mission has come to the surface to do mission effectively in the developing countries.

It was a mutually respectable partnership. The model of ministry offered by CMS in Lenasia was based on a progressively declining scale of financial support – with 50% financial support in the first year, 30% in the second year and 10% in the third with a view to the congregation becoming self-reliant.

My appointment as Rector of the Anglican Parish of Christ the Saviour Lenasia therefore was a strategic move from the world church perspective. It was an experiment to pioneer a South-to-South sharing of leadership. This programme was eventually facilitated by Anglican Mission Bodies in CMS and the United Society for Propagating the Gospel (USPG) in partnership with the Church of North India and the Anglican Church of South Africa. It was an important mission model from the perspective of the changing trends amongst traditional mission bodies in the UK.

9. 3 Building capacity and participating in the Ministry of Reconciliation

It was not long before I realized the challenges of moving from the known to the unknown in the mission context. I could now connect more sympathetically with those missionaries who moved from their countries to preach the gospel and participated in building communities of hope in developing and underdeveloped countries. I found myself after sixteen years of ordained ministry starting again as an apprentice in the parish of Christ the Saviour, Lenasia.

9. 3. 1 Indian Community at large in Lenasia

It has already been highlighted that the Indian community in South Africa, particularly the indentured Indians, had faced uprooting from their backgrounds, and their history has been deeply disruptive with serious signs of social disintegration. Hilda Kuper in her research has found that in spite of such painful history there had been an emergence of ex-indentured elite in business and professional circles. About 25% of the wealthiest business men in South Africa are Tamil, Telugu and Hindi-speaking Hindus.

Lenasia boasts a fairly well-to-do Asian community. However there is a visible presence of poverty and economic disparity amongst the Indian community. But in comparison to the local native Africans Indians are quite settled financially and are much ahead of the natives in terms of education, business and other privileged positions in the society.

9. 3. 2 The challenges faced by the Indian Community in Lenasia

The common challenges faced by the community in Lenasia at large had to do with alcohol, drugs, crime, illiteracy, unemployment and family violence and the increasing breakdown of marriage and family life. Since 1998 the issue of HIV/Aids had come to surface. Unfortunately the Asian community had been in denial and had failed to acknowledge that HIV/Aids are not confined to a particular race. But there is growing awareness among Indians now that this is a threat to all the communities.

On the religious front there had been no organized dialogue between the faith communities, though there had been efforts made by politicians to bring the communities together. In Lenasia the uniting factor is seen among communities in their acknowledgement that they all belonged to the Asian race and are somehow connected racially to each other. Apartheid in that sense had caused these communities to live together in spite of a wide range of disparity at various fronts within the community life.

It would not be wrong to say that though there is no casteism exercised in Lenasia there is clear divide amongst people on economic basis. Upper caste Hindus continue to exercise food restrictions. Business in the town, particularly the food industry, is predominantly in the hands of Muslim or Gujarati Community.

9. 3. 3 The Anglican Indian Christian Community in Lenasia – A deeply polarized community

Most of the Indian Christians in Lenasia are second or third generation Christians. In the Anglican Parish most of the families are deeply polarized with the presence of Hindu and Tamil faiths. This is due to interfaith marriages of parents and children. Christians who were converted in South Africa continue to have their relatives around them who belong to other faiths.

In my pastoral ministry I had to deal with conflicts in families as a result of tension between the followers of different religions within family life. Strong arguments between husband and wife, parents and children, and in-laws at times reached to the point of

separation and the breakdown of relationships. It was interesting to note that most of the arguments were initiated by the Christian partners who could not tolerate the Hindu temple or shrine in their homes. It was a difficult pastoral field to deal with.

9. 3. 4 Parish life of Christ the Saviour – The challenges of Ministry

The Anglican parish of Lenasia financially had been a non-viable congregation and could not maintain full time clergy. After the death of Fr. Sigamony who had built this congregation and the residential priest in Fr. Koopan who stayed for about five years in the nineties, the Parish was ministered by the visiting clergy from the Diocese. This had both positive and negative affects. Positive, as it gave opportunity to lay people to develop their skills and take responsibilities to minister themselves between Sundays. Negative as it created competition amongst different prayer groups resulting in the creation of different competing groups trying to outdo each other.

The congregation has a long history of division and fragmentation. It is mainly due to the claims made by different groups who are living with their family history in Lenasia. This trend was challenged by the new members of the congregation who were beginning to arrive in Johannesburg from Durban in search of jobs and started living in Lenasia after apartheid.

In 1996 before our arrival they were worshipping in a School Hall. There had been a big plan to construct a new Church building for which they had raised some money. However this project was unacceptable to some members in the parish and caused division. The project of constructing a new big Church was shelved on two grounds (after a lengthy debate in the annual general meeting between two groups; and I had the privilege to Chair this first AGM of the parish).: first, the parish with 20 to 30 members could not viably to maintain the present building financially; second, the new building would become a white elephant to maintain. The emphasis was to be put more on mission and ministry of this parish and on the gathering of the members.

Since there had been no provision for full time residential clergy at Lenasia there was no residence for the Priest. We as a family were accommodated with a parish family for a couple of months. Fifteen days after our arrival Bina my wife lost her mother in India. *Before we could start our ministry to the congregation, the congregation had to minister us. A powerful service of comfort was arranged by lay people. It is this encounter which helped me to connect with the capacity of these people.* We were eventually moved to rented accommodation and the same property was bought by the Church at a very low price from Tony Saldanha (the owner) a businessman who used to be the treasurer of this parish.

9. 3. 5 Some pointers that shaped our Ministry in Lenasia

It is important to record some events and happenings which highlight the challenges and energy existing in the Church. By focusing on these realities we were able to give some shape to our ministry in Lenasia.

1. *A spate of suicides in the congregation* – In my first two years of ministry there were four suicides committed in the parish. In Lenasia among the Indian community at large, as we later learnt, a high rate of suicides historically is prevalent. It has to do with the historic depressive mental condition among Indians from an indentured background. There were a big number of suicides committed in the farms in Natal by indentured Indians and also in Durban at large among the Indian community. *We had a five weeks training programme for twenty members to become barefoot counselors. We had two attempted suicides during 1998 and 2003. These two persons were well supported by barefoot counselors. But now they were the wounded healers for some members who were showing the signs of weakness. I have learnt that early this year an important lay leader of Lenasia parish who had worked with me and was well respected person in his forties was found hanging in one of the pleasure resorts a little outside Johannesburg. He committed suicide. Families live with these pains.*

2. *Stewardship and financial mismanagement* – After my arrival it was discovered that there had been no proper accounts maintained in the parish. After investigation there was recovery of money from various responsible individuals

by the Diocese. After this event some of these people left the parish and were ministered by other clergy. Lack of leadership and accountability was a big issue to deal with in Lenasia. *This has taught Lenasia parish members a good lesson. Today the financial management of this parish is exemplary in the Diocese. They are a growing congregation and capable of supporting a full time clergy-person. After my departure from this parish a full time local young Indian clergy is under training well supported by the parish. They are self-reliant.*

3. ***Fragmentation and Group tension*** – The parish was divided. No programs could be implemented easily. The tension between two groups had to be dealt with. In depth pastoral care was needed between Sundays. At times *there had been open fight between these two groups in the Church during the service. Clergy had to help them reconcile with each others. As I was listening to them one group with forceful voice and arrogance declared that this church is built by my family members. It is my family which has contributed the most to build this church. However when asked what have you done to build this church in your own personal capacity beyond your family members who are no more present there was no response but a strange 'Silence'. It is by connecting with such silence we were able to move forward.*

4. ***Image of the Parish in the community*** – The parish members lived cordially with the outside community and were known and supported by small business shops. Lenasia knew the Anglican parish through their annual fund raising Church Dance every year at the civic centre. This event continues to remain quite popular. They were not known to be an ardent worshiping community in Lenasia. Let me narrate this interesting encounter which continues to keeps me alert till this day in my ministry in the Church: *The Parish now had a full time clergyman and some members decided to meet every morning during the week from Monday to Friday at 6am in the church for prayers. It was decided that the Church bell should ring every morning at 5.45am. On Saturday morning on the same week when I went to collect some books from the Church a group of men from the neighbourhood approached me. They said their families were very afraid and disturbed as they heard for the last five days the Church bell ringing early in the morning. I ask*

them why you should be disturbed by the ringing of the Church bell in the mornings. They replied, why so many deaths in your community? This made no sense to me. But then they said, isn't it true that the Church bell rings during the week days only when you have a funeral? We have never heard the bell ring in the morning during the week days, and a funeral in such early hours in Lenasia is strange! This gave me an opportunity to say we are also a praying community!

5. ***Growing tension in family life due to mixed faith marriages*** – Though the families co-exist with different faiths, within the family there had been no dialogue between them. Rather, there were growing conflicts among the families due to mixed religious marriages. *In one visit I found a Hindu temple set in the Lounge in a family where man was a Hindu. The children had followed the father's religion but the woman who is from a 'coloured' background and boastful of her link with Scottish blood had a big problem with this setting of the temple corner in the lounge. She had a head-on fight with her husband first for setting a Hindu temple in the lounge and on top of that for placing a crucifix at the centre of his temple in the midst of all the Hindu religious figures. I went to visit them to open a dialogue between them. The man was at first not willing to receive me but then decided to sit (perhaps because I was an Indian Priest). In course of time we both became friends. But during this dialogue he made a statement saying, my wife and your member claims to be Christian but she has no Shradha (reverence) for her religion. I have to push her out every Sunday morning to go and attend the Church worship. She doesn't like to go to the Church even once in a week. It is I who make her read her Bible. I am proud to be a Hindu as I pray every morning without fail. But my wife thinks my gods are useless!*

6. ***Alcohol and substance abuse*** – This was a very serious issue in our parish. Unfortunately in the Anglican Church the use of alcohol is not prohibited even among clergy. As long as the clergy don't abuse it they are allowed to use the alcohol. This includes bishops. In families alcohol abuse was becoming an issue. Parochially clergy could not do anything to help with this problem as they themselves were drinking alcohol with their members at social functions.

Substance abuse through drugs was on the increase. It was not simply amongst young people but also in different age groups and including both sexes. *I will never forget my first encounter with the Church Warden who became eventually the first wounded healer in the parish of Lenasia: I had visited him the previous night to discuss the need to attest my Indian driving license at the Indian Consulate in Johannesburg. He was to take me on the following morning as I did not have transport and I was new to the place. I had spent more than an hour with him. I reached his residence the following morning and found him washing his car. I asked him are you not ready? He told me no as he was on holiday. I waited thinking that he would get ready after some time and kept talking to him and he kept cleaning his car. After a considerable time he asked me for tea and we sat down in his lounge and drank the tea. I thought he will now go and get ready. But he asked me, 'Father, so tell me what made you come here?' I was a bit surprised and told him what we had discussed in the previous evening. He laughed with a peculiar (but not embarrassed at all) smile and said, Ha, Father I was in good spirits. I don't remember anything we discussed. I am sorry!* Today this person does not take alcohol and has motivated many people in the parish to stop drinking alcohol. We began with him a group of wounded healers who used to go and visit families who had alcohol or drug-related problems.

7. ***Well trained in Anglican mannerisms at the altar -*** I had to undergo training by lay ministers to follow the Anglican mannerisms and symbolic gestures while approaching and leaving the altar. They followed the high Anglican tradition for Eucharistic services. It was interesting to observe that this parish needed a priest who could be a Baptist/Methodist in the pulpit, a non-conformist in pastoral care, and High Anglican at the altar. I had to develop my skills in this realm. *In my second year I had a pulpit exchange with another Anglican priest for the Good Friday three hours devotion. As per the Anglican tradition clergy along with other servers and lay ministers at beginning had to prostrate themselves in front of the altar as a sign of complete humility to the suffering Christ. This priest from a Durban background came from a low Anglican Church background. He was rather surprised but followed the tradition. But this clergy could not get up. It was*

then realized that he had pulled a muscle. However, he was helped up and survived the service, actualizing the suffering of Jesus in his own suffering! He suffered for several weeks. He could never imagine conducting any future Good Friday service in Lenasia!

8. **The entry of the first African family into Anglican Parish of Lenasia** – In 1999 we had the first black family who moved from Soweto to Lenasia; we now have many families beginning to live in Lenasia coming from Soweto. After a few months this lady was beginning to feel at ease with others. Most of the people were cordial and happy with this family. *The Parish after the Sunday morning service arranges tea for the members. There were times when families used to share meals on special occasions. One morning this African lady entered into the kitchen and started opening the lid of the pots to see what was cooked. She was feeling at home and therefore began to take freedom to be part of the families. But this caused a great upheaval in one of the groups of our membership and one Indian lady came to me and burst out, Father, we will not tolerate this…how dare this lady touch our pots and interfere in our kitchen? However, eventually this complaining lady became one of the closest friends of this first African woman of our parish. The congregation eventually unanimously elected her as the first black African warden in Lenasia Parish! The Bishop asked her about how she feels in the parish. Her reply was, This is my family!*

9. **Hindu, Tamil and Muslim conversion** – During 1998-2004 we had 67 converts in the parish. Most of them came from mixed marriages in the parish but some of them came through the contacts of our members and their ministry to the neighbourhood. *Nilopher, an 18 year-old girl, had been attending our Sunday morning services for more than four months with one of our members who lived near her house and was responsible for introducing her to the parish. One morning after the service she shared her desire to become Christian. I asked her if she had shared this with her parents. She said no. She was brought up by her Muslim mother as single parent. I asked her to continue to attend the Church and discuss her feelings with her mother. After a few months she again asked for becoming Christian. I agreed to begin catechism. But after a while I received a*

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call from a Muslim leader blaming me of misleading this young girl. I asked him that he should counsel this girl through Muslim teaching and that I will delay the baptism but I will not refuse if she still comes and ask for it. After a couple of months the same person telephoned and said, Fr. John, go ahead with this baptism. I requested him to send her family on the day of her baptism at the Church and let them stand near the baptismal font. Her mother was not present but some of her other relatives were there to support in this decision! There were about 25 Adult baptisms and all these baptisms were done by the Diocesan Bishop. During my catechism classes to these seekers I always asked about their motives for becoming Christians and the answer was most of the time common, *'They felt peace and love in the Church'.* They were impressed by the hospitality of the Church and they found through the sermons that Jesus Christ was an assuring God. The Hindu converts said that they found Hinduism very complicated to relate to so many gods. Four converts from Islam said that they found the God in Islam very impersonal.

10. ***Weekday home prayer groups*** – A couple of groups under the care of lay ministers have a very strong ministry to the families of the parish during week days. These groups visit homes and conduct prayer and praise times with the families. Their ministry of comfort is very strong. *We were also ministered to by them both at the time of my mother-in-law's death and four years ago when my mother had died in India and I could not attend the funeral. These prayer groups are the backbone of our parish.*

9. 4 Anglican Parish in Lenasia–Missiological perspective; a –Mission-shaped Parish

In the above pointers I have shared the pain and pathos of my parish, their anguish and confusion, their vulnerability and at the same time their capacity of working out their spirituality in the midst of all these weaknesses: conducting prayer fellowships, introducing different faith communities to the church, building youth and children's ministry, growing skills, attending training programmes, offering hospitality, supporting, committing, confessing, changing, becoming wounded healers. In eight years they have

grown in numbers. The average Church attendance is more than 150 people every Sunday. They are now financially a self-reliant congregation. The depressed communities after conversion were a transformed community. The efforts of the Church should now be to make this transformed community a transforming community through its life, witness and service. The empowering stories in the gospel help the converts to grasp their own on-going transforming experience in Christianity. The impact of religious conversion on the cultural identity of converts has to be seen in them becoming a New Community which continues to empower itself in through the understanding and knowledge of the birth, death, resurrection of Jesus Christ. The mark of a 'wounded healer' community is to be found in the ability and capacity of the community to carry the marks of Jesus on their body and reveal them when asked so that people may believe that they are a resurrection people.

In my apprenticeship I learnt that the major task of the Church is to help uncover the deepest sense of longing and purpose of converts who decided to move into the Christian faith. The Church has to closely watch how converts perceive, how they think, what about their stewardship of life, and with what attitude they exercise their faith? How they grasp Christian teachings to build their spirituality and begin to discover their role in the life of the Church and wider community as 'wounded healers'?

The pointers mentioned above made me aware about the challenges our parish had to meet. It was important that Lenasia become a reconciling community. The challenge was huge but I was beginning to sense the initiative God had already taken in bringing these people as workers in his vineyard. I was confident about the potential and capacity of our membership to develop themselves as a spiritual resource bringing reconciliation in the life of the parish and community at large. It did happen and they discovered quite profoundly the power of God's grace.

[A published report on the Missional profile of Lenasia is appended to this thesis as Notes with permission of CMS. This was published in the year 2004 in 'Yes' Magazine – May-August Issue - of CMS London]

9. 4. 1 Self-searching and re-connecting with our Spirituality

In order to become a transforming community the Church has to keep narrating their conversion stories and call again to mind their transformation experience. For this reason in this thesis a major focus is given to connecting South African Anglican Indian Christians in South Africa to their roots in Indian history.

In Lenasia I orally shared with them their background and arranged for them to visit India in groups. We raised the questions about our ministry and mission from the following perspectives in Lenasia. The intention was to understand our spirituality and its concomitant effects on our role and ministry in Lenasia.

From an Incarnational perspective – How do we understand why God was made flesh in Jesus Christ? Why the crucifixion and the resurrection? Why was the gift of the Holy Spirit given to his disciples? The Anglican ritual of the Eucharist was taken very seriously to relate their suffering and the suffering of the people around them and discover how Jesus overcame suffering and resurrected and before ascending prepared his disciples to continue the work of reconciliation.

From a cultural perspective – We asked, did we have the capacity to participate in nation building with other races and faiths in South Africa? Are we inclusive in our approach in dealing with the complex racial and religious issues in the post-apartheid South Africa? We now had African membership. We wanted to learn about the spirit of 'Ubuntu' (importance of interdependence and human dignity – 'I am because we are; since we are therefore I am'). We also wanted to share with African membership the Indian term 'Sadbhavana' (ability and capacity to live with good feelings and love)– experienced and discovered by converts through Christian faith and narrated in and through lyrics composed by them as reflected in chapter seven.

From a social perspective - How do we understand our new identity and the unique experience of Jesus Christ in dealing with both 'sinners' and 'sinned-against'? It has to do with understanding their cultural conditioning in apartheid and post-apartheid South

Africa; narrating and repeating the stories of their past and its effects on their new life in post-apartheid South Africa. The focus was more on their life 'now' in their present context. This will be explained in more detail in the section 'Sadbhavana Griha' in this chapter.

From an economic perspective – It was important to connect with the economic disparity amongst different people in Lenasia. It was important to ask: how can we use and share our economic resources in building the community of hope? How can we first become a self-reliant congregation to support our work and ministry in Lenasia? This led to the opening of 'Sadbhavana Griha' with a very special feeding scheme and sharing of warm clothes to connect with the poverty and hunger in the nearby informal settlements area.

From a Spiritual perspective – How do we live out our Christian spirituality? Can we become a resource to extend the ministry of reconciliation and to do our mission keeping in mind the marginal in Lenasia community? The pastoral emphasis in this area was on 'praying with eyes open'. If Calvin has frequently referred to the world around us as a 'theatre of God's glory' then how do we gaze at this glory through spiritual eyes? When do we laugh, or cry, puzzled and dismayed at the performance as we watch 'God's glory' in the theatre of this world? Eugene comments that there are two mystical traditions in the life of prayer sometimes labeled 'kataphatic' (praying with your eyes open) and 'apophatic' (praying with your eyes shut). He said,

> "The western Church is heavily skewed on the side of apophatic. The rubric of prayer when I was a child was: fold your hands, bow your heads, shut your eyes and we will pray". (Peterson, 1995, 85)

Shreiter has raised a broader profile on the understanding of spirituality in the ministry of reconciliation through Jesus' appearance stories mentioned in chapter eight of this thesis.

9. 4. 2 A missiological perspective

People seek to believe (the quest for meaning), belong (the quest for community) and become (a quest for hope and future). How do we tap into these yearnings and help move the conversation towards Jesus? This is one of the major challenges faced by the Church today. In our missiological approach it is important to move from tweaking to returning – *Metanoia* (*not curve but U turn*): from reforming to reconfiguring – *New Expression* (*from improvement to rearrangement*): from focusing on ministry to being a movement – *Proactive* (*moving out into Communities*): and from Centripetal to Centrifugal (*from being Minister to Missionary with the emphasis of making disciples).*

Every religion in the contemporary world is in some way missionary. Hinduism, through Gurus or the Yogic tradition, speaks more about change in 'conduct of life' rather than radical conversion. But 'conversion' and its concept of radical change prevails among Christians and Muslims. Though the word 'missionary' is for some in the Church a pejorative term, the Church should not hesitate to use it; but use it to emphasizes discipleship and not proselytization.

The early church grew because believers had taken a U-turn in their lives; they reconfigured their lives and culture, and developed mechanisms to move, or endeavoured to move, towards a particular end. In chapter seven the lyrics composed by the converts is a good example of their endeavours to reconfigure their whole life through Christian spirituality.

The growth of the church in Asia, Africa and other developing countries was on similar principles to those seen in the early Church. The emphasis was on being a missionary to yourselves, your people. However, Church institutions and structures were quick to captivate them under the care of so-called ministers whose brief was to maintain these new groups within Mission Compounds/Church boundaries to protect and provide religious instructions within the Church buildings. Eventually people and ministers became more concerned to protect and maintain their structures/denominational identities. The movement stopped mission, became stagnant and energies were diverted

from mission to maintenance. The emphasis in mission was reversed: from centrifugal to centripetal, from a movement (missionary) to institutionalization (ministers) and from reconfiguring to reform and from returning to tweaking.

It is imperative for the Anglican Church in South Africa to move beyond the comfort zone of its boundaries and the power image connecting to its Victorian history. A Christ-like presence and engagement with communities at large is the only way forward for the Anglican Church to live effectively. In order to facilitate people in general to connect with the Church, an ecclesiological review or a new understanding of the Church will be needed. The Anglican Church should find ways and means to express itself and be seen as the *'The Church of the Poor'* and not *'for the poor'* and the *'The Church with others'* and not *'The Church for others'*. The Church has to evolve in formulating a contextual theology.

9. 5 Theology as Praxis –the priest/pastoral and prophetic role of the Parish

Theologically, in its very essence, the Church is a community bound by covenant and covenant loyalty. God's way of salvation was not simply saving individuals and then making them into group, but calling a people group and within the covenant framework providing opportunities for persons to respond to his love. To be a person always means to be in a community.

The Ministry of the Church in Lenasia required multiple approaches to meet various needs as mentioned in the previous section of this chapter (9. 2.5 – pointers). There was a need for a broader theological framework.

The pastoral role to shepherd or care for a community in post-apartheid South Africa is very crucial. People need constant assurances for their crushed psyche. They need help to overcome the hurts of the past and confidence to live in the present changing scenario in South Africa. The importance of discovering the meaning of scripture, developing a life

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of prayer, and guiding growth into maturity continues to play an important role in the pastoral ministry.

9. 5.1 The Pastoral Ministry

As part of my reading in 1996 I bought a book call *The Gift* by Eugene H. Peterson. This book reflects on Christian ministry. Peterson brings to notice the importance of a forgotten art in the Pastoral ministry called 'Curing Souls'. He differentiates between *'running a church'* and *'curing souls'*. He tries not to reduce the pastoral work to institutional duties. He emphasizes Pastoral care in between Sundays. He points out three areas of contrast between 'running a Church' and a 'cure of souls': ***Initiative, Language and Problems.***

(1) INITIATIVE - If I run the Church I take charge. I seize the initiative. He emphasizes the traditional doctrine prevenience; God is everywhere and always seizing the initiative. God gets things going. God had and continues to have the first word.

> "Prevenience is the conviction that God has been working diligently, redemptively and strategically before I appeared on the scene, before I was aware there was something here for me to do". (Peterson, 1989, 60)

My task as a pastor was to discern what God is doing in Lenasia, to discern the traces of Grace, to read the history of Love in this group, and to get into the motion which God had already set going. In post-apartheid South Africa as I entered with my family the reflection of Peterson was powerfully helpful. It helped me to become an apprentice of God's mission in Lenasia.

> "God has already taken the initiative. Like one who walks in late to a meeting, I am entering a complex situation in which God has already said decisive words and acted in decisive ways. My work is not necessarily to announce that but to discover what he is doing and live appropriately". (Peterson, 1989, 61)

(2) LANGUAGE – If I run the Church I begin to use language that is *descriptive and motivational*. It orients us in reality. In 'curing souls', there is another language more essential to our humanity and far more basic to our life of faith. It is '*personal language*.' The words used in this language are: to express oneself, to converse, to relate. It is language to and with.

> "Love is offered and received, ideas are developed, feelings are articulated, silences are honoured…The pastoral task is to use the language appropriate in this most basic aspect of our humanity – not language that describes, not language that motivates, but spontaneous language: cries and exclamations, confessions and appreciations, words the heart speaks". (Peterson, 1989, 62063)

(3) PROBLEM – In running the Church I solve the problem. A solved life is a reduced life. Life is not so much a problem to be solved as mystery to be explored. That is certainly the biblical stance.

> "Life is not something we manage to hammer together and keep in repair by our wits; it is unfathomable gift. We are immersed in mysteries: incredible love, confounding evil, the creation, the cross, a grace, God". (Peterson, 1989, 64)

If a pastor's life becomes that of an accomplice, treating only the problems or always there to fix problems then there is danger that he/she may abdicate the most important work,

> "Which is directing worship in the traffic, discovering the presence of the cross in the paradoxes and chaos between Sundays, calling attention to the 'splendor in the ordinary', and, most of all, teaching a life of prayer to our friends and companions in the pilgrimage". (Peterson, 1989, 65)

This leads me more closely to my current reading of Shreiter who suggests three characteristics that mark the spirituality of reconciliation:

"(1) an attitude of Listening and Waiting: the ministers who themselves have experienced reconciliation will make for the best listeners in this situation. Waiting is an active capacity. It involves waiting on God and God's reconciling grace – an opportunity God takes to teach us all kinds of other things along the way. (2) Attention and Compassion: Attention is basis of compassion our ability to wait and to be with, to walk alongside a victim at the victim's pace. It is 'to feel and suffer with'. This goes beyond creating an environment of trust and safety. (3) The Post-Exilic stance; where post-exilic biblical literature as a resource for living in post-exilic times can today help sustain the spirituality of reconciliation. Shreiter uses Ezekiel 47 (Post exilic literature) which can be nourishing as it employs the experience of reconciliation welling up in the soul". (Shreiter,1999, 71-73)

9. 5. 2 The Priestly and Prophetic Task

The prophetic and priestly roles in biblical tradition are seen to be close to each other and in the same tradition e.g. Samuel, Jeremiah and Haggai. In the Bible both the prophet and priest proclaimed condemnation and comfort. The priestly role in the Church therefore can not be reduced to only formal, cultic and ceremonial aspect of religious life. The church has a priestly role, a reconciling role. Emili Castro observes,

"The church in performing the priestly function of joining the life of the individual with society is performing its special vocation and is rendering an important service to society. It disseminates information, stimulates conscience, summons people to vocation, purifies intention, inspires courage and nourishes hope". (England, 1982, 204)

There are varied prophetic roles attached to different liberation paradigms in the Bible. The prophets' role is seen to be that of a leader participating with God in delivering people from the oppression of Pharaoh in Egypt, conscientising the people, and planning the strategy. The Church's prophetic role therefore will be varied in different situations,

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"Sometimes the church may be called to be the bearer of salvation by drinking the cup of vicarious suffering, at other times she may be the leader in the struggles of liberation, and at the other times her task may be to identify and proclaim as the agent of salvation whom God uses today". (England, 1982, 205)

Both the priestly and prophetic tasks are crucial in giving meaning to the rituals of the Church in negotiating with perpetrators and victims to bring reconciliation in the world. This kind of prophetic and priestly ministry through the paschal ministry of the Church brings Jesus to the centre of human suffering, pain and pathos. Shreiter singles out the Eucharist in the Church ritual,

"Gathering around the Church Eucharist table, the broken, damaged and abused bodies of individual victims and the broken body of the church are taken up in the body of Christ".(Shreiter, 1999, 75)

9. 5. 3 Theology as praxis

It is important to make the following comments before I discuss briefly the theology of Praxis as the foundation of establishing the project 'Sadbhavana Griha' in Lenasia.

The context in which South African Anglican Indian Christians are called to be 'wounded healers' is not a 'Hindu nation' but 'a predominantly Christian country'. The perpetrators are not seen to be 'upper caste Brahmin Hindus' but the 'western Christian world'.

South African Anglican Indian Christians must begin to connect with their cultural roots in India and discover their cultural identity rooted in subaltern religions in India. This thesis in a limited way provides them an opportunity to connect with their roots and history beyond South Africa for more intelligent participation in the life and the challenges of South Africa. They should begin to read and understand the emerging 'Dalit' Theology in India and the on-going struggles against caste discriminations in India.

Indians after conversion to Christianity have undergone a transformation in terms of their culture. They should understand their new identity in its utopian dimension by retaining their creative significance of transformation and making it available as a resource to help in responding to the challenges faced in post-apartheid South Africa. This will require from them a total participation with various existing cultures in South Africa, particularly the native South African culture, to work in building a new nation and a new human society.

In the sociology of theology attempts are made to see how particular forms of thought are related to particular cultural conditions. The Praxis theology model has become a major form of theological reflection in pursuing the efforts of social theology. The praxis model of theological reflection can be traced way back to the third century with Origen, but it has found different meanings progressively both in western and developing countries.

Praxis is the ensemble of social relationships that include and determine the structures of social consciousness. Theoretically it represents a dialectical moment within practice, as doe's action. There are three particular tasks of theology as praxis:

(1) To help disentangle true consciousness from false consciousness
(2) To be concerned with on-going reflection upon action
(3) To sustain transformative praxis

9. 6 'Sadbhavana Griha' – (An Abode of Good Feelings and Love)

As explained in this thesis, the South African Anglican Indian Christians' conversion story is rooted in the oppressive history of caste and racial discrimination. In and through conversion they experienced liberation and transformation. This thesis, while tracing the history of the South African Indian Christians' conversion stories rooted in Indian history, has also highlighted the impact it has made on their cultural identity.

It has been pointed out that the converts have continued to live as Christians in oppressive social structures both in India and South Africa. Through lyrics and Dalit Theology it has

been highlighted that spiritually these converts have shown a developing ability to be 'wounded healers' in the society. It is in this capacity of developing a Christian spirituality as a true consciousness (narrative of truth) to overcome the false consciousness (narrative of lies) that they can live as a reconciling community in this world where oppressive social structures continue to exist and where perpetrators who cause oppression continue to live in the society. Converts must continue to remain a resource for transformative praxis in this world as a resurrection people through the Christian faith. The quality of action to challenge the perpetrator is rooted in the Christian understanding and method of reconciliation shown by Jesus Christ. This has been discussed in the previous chapters. It is encouraged that in order to bring social change in the new South Africa: Indians and Native South Africans with other cultures in South Africa should work together to build communities of hope.

This chapter has shared a case study of Lenasia at a micro-level. A brief account of the socio-historical and psycho-religious conditions of people in Lenasia is shared in this chapter. The congregation of Lenasia, with other races and faiths, has lived in a paradoxical situation. The parish had undergone a process of healing of its inner self through reflection and action based on a Biblical understanding of their salvation and wholeness in Jesus Christ. The method used in the formation of their spiritual being had been via the interior path, or one may call it Wisdom Theology. They were now ready to move out and express themselves as a resurrection people to the wider society in Lenasia. They were motivated to sustain their transformative praxis through a conscientious engagement with the wider society.

The Parish had extensive reflections on their growth and the changes in their lives from 1996 – 2002 and started listing their discoveries as a parish. This list of discoveries provided them with the motivation to establish 'Sadbhavan Griha' (An Abode of Love and Good Feelings).

9. 6. 1 The Discoveries the Parish had made

Their personal growth in terms of parochial life was settling. There was an increase in membership, and leadership building through various leadership training programmes. An active Sunday school and Youth Fellowship were in place. A growing racial mix with a racially mixed congregational leadership was in place. About 67 new converts where more than 22 were adults gave a boost to their confidence. They were becoming more open and hospitable.

The Parish had been able to take a number of initiatives in building a harmonious relationship with the community of faiths in Lenasia, which included conducting Interfaith Retreats, Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue, conducting Christmas services at the Sirdi Sai Centre and attending all the Inter-faith functions.

The importance was realized of the need for ecumenical relationships with other Churches. Organizing Christian conventions and inviting local leaders from different congregations resulted in friendship with the Uniting Reformed Church, the Gospel Church and the Church of the Nazarene.

I was asked by the congregation's leadership to help in preparing a project which could involve the members in dealing with social and cultural issues faced by the communities in Lenasia.

I came up with the idea to open a centre with an Indian name for two reasons:

First to connect them with their Indian cultural roots and second to help the community know that minority communities like the Indians have a role to play in building the post-apartheid South Africa with their cultural identity.

The name I suggested was *"Sadbhavana Griha"* (which means An Abode of Love and Fellowship). This centre was intended to 'live their faith' by reflecting the concept of love shared in the birth and ministry of Jesus Christ, his death, resurrection and

progressive revelation through the gift of the Holy Spirit. The person who would live and give meaning to this centre was to be called *'Sadbhavi'* (which means a person who has the capacity to share the love and good feelings of Jesus).

Our Missiological and Theological praxis was discovered through our reflection on a passage from the **Gospel of John 1:35-39:**

"The next day John was standing there again with two of his disciples, when they saw Jesus walking by,

"There is the Lamb of God" – (Vs29), who takes away the sin of the world!"

The phrase 'Lamb of God' has a liturgical sound and John is speaking about a paschal lamb who takes away the sins of the world.

"The two disciples heard him say this and went with Jesus. Jesus turned, saw them following him, and asked, 'what are you looking for?' They answered, where do you live Rabbi? (This means 'Teacher'), 'Come and See' He replied.

(Other translation) Jesus turning around found two disciples following him and asked, "What do you want"? They said, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying"? "Come, "He replied, "and you will see".

There are two different translations: This can be can be interpreted in two ways:
Jesus turned and saw them following, 'What are you looking for?' 'Where are you staying?' 'Come and See'.

A straitjacket approach; 'What are you looking for?' 'Come and see'. Or 'Follow me; I will take you where I live. The place I live you will find everything is made ready for you. You will get what you want.'

Jesus turning around and asked, 'What do you want'? 'Where do you live?' 'Come' and 'you will see'

I am rather close to this translation: 'What do you want?   Where are you staying? 'Come' and 'You will see'.

A calm but probing straight question but with concern and acknowledgement that the person is in need of something: 'Come' is a genuine invitation to offer hospitality in the hope that the person will be able to see what he/she wants. 'Come and you will see'. This provides enough scope to see a bodily vision of God's House and the 'spiritual perception' with which this house lives. 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.' 'Come' and 'you will see'!

Through 'Sadbhavana Griha' we wanted to offer our own members the opportunity to discover their role of discipleship, the meaning of their confession and their life as a reconciling Christian community. We also wanted to offer an opportunity through this centre for other members of the community to experience love and fellowship in their times of distress, or their search for truth, or time and space for philosophical reflection, or learning and discovering personal healing. And also to become aware about common issues faced by the community at large and to participate as a healed person in creating a healing community.

Our long term plans were to attract the wider world, nationally and internationally, to use this centre for energizing lives through sabbatical, or through exposure or interchange programmes of grassroots involvement and education and experience in a close-knit interfaith community in Lenasia.

Detailed programmes developed ranging from workshops, literacy classes to meetings of Alcohol Anonymous groups, an anti-smoking campaign, interfaith dialogue and running of feeding schemes. We had visitors using the centre from Ghana's Archbishop with his fellow Bishop friend, an Archdeacon from Burundi, and Visitors from Kenya Urban Ministry to residential women from the Alcoholics Anonymous projects in Lenasia.

There were worship services every morning and evening and an emerging inter-racial congregation.

The parish was supported for this vision as they shared it with the wider world. A double storey building was purchased with eight rooms in it. Six major mission agencies participated in this vision. The centre ran effectively during my stay in Lenasia. Since it was an experiment I measured the success of this centre not in terms of what it could achieve but the amount of energy it could deliver to the people of the Anglican parish in discovering their spiritual capacity to reach out from their closed church walls and connect with the wider community as a resurrection people. This was a discovery for the Anglican parish; that they could come close to the native African community and learn and connect with their pain and pathos in the spirit of being the 'wounded healers'.

9. 7 Conclusion

In this study I have made an attempt to connect the conversion story of South African Anglican Indian Christians to its roots in India. Their conversion story is rooted in their liberation experience from a depressed community status in the Hindu caste system through Christianity.

I have tried to explain the impact of religious conversion on cultural identity through describing the nature of the transformation the Indian depressed communities have undergone after becoming Christians. From the *social perspective* the impact was seen in them becoming a respectable community and in the removal of caste stigma and its concomitant effects on their social role in society. From the *economic perspective* the impact was seen in the improvement of their living conditions with better housing, education, better opportunities and financial assistance from the western church. They were well protected by the Church structure. From the *psychological perspective* the impact is seen in their confidence to live as a separate community in the face of their own relatives in the Hindu culture. They developed an attitude of superiority to the existing depressed communities in India. Their social appearance was seen to be healthy in terms of their understanding and participation in the life of the wider society. They felt mentally

and socially fit to live as human being. From the *spiritual perspective* they evolved in creating a new religious culture for them selves and a new ethnic identity as Indian Christians. Through the interpretation of the lyrics composed by converts I have tried to point out their ability to connect their story of pain and pathos and liberation through the biblical narratives. The story of the life and work of Jesus Christ in the Gospel energised the lives of converts. They found a personal God. They found a God of love and compassion. They found the Christian Church a much kinder and more hospitable religious institution.

While discussing the positive impact of religious conversion on cultural identity I have also pointed out some ambiguities attached to this process. I have observed that the Church to some extent was caste-oriented in terms of accommodating converts. Converts from the upper caste dominated the polity of the Indian Church resulting in continued exploitation of converts from the lower caste. Though better in comparison to their plight in the Hindu religion which was unbearable, their growth in Christianity was not all that good. In India I have highlighted the attitude of upper caste converts who after conversion did not want to disassociate totally from their Hindu people hence they began to give Indian Christianity a theology from an upper-caste perspective. It resulted in the suppression of the voices of converts from the lower caste. In South Africa also Indian converts were dominated by the western leadership. The converts could not develop their full potential.

Another ambiguity that I have highlighted is from a mission perspective. After becoming Christians converts isolated themselves and became aliens among their own people. In peculiar circumstances, both in India due to casteism and in South Africa due to racism, converts were camouflaged by the Church within the Church boundaries or mission compounds or in group areas. Eventually the four walls of the Church and mission compounds became a comfort zone for converts and they began to live a segregated community life. Apartheid in South Africa added more to this complexity. There was no meaningful interaction between the converts and other cultures. They allowed themselves to get merged into western culture. In this thesis I have criticised the Anglican Church for

not directing the converts towards living out their Christian experience in the society. I have pointed out the importance of converts sharing their testimony for doing theology through their life, witness and service among those who continue to suffer. They could be encouraged to live a life which could even penetrate the heart of the perpetrators and draw them closer to the healing power of Jesus.

I have taken a good deal of space in this thesis to look into the possibilities of Native and Indian Christians working together to create a healing culture in South Africa. An attempt is made to point out the interrelatedness of the experiences of suffering of Native Christians and Indian Christians from indentured backgrounds. I am conscious that this attempt has not totally been able to connect with the broad and complicated disparity issues between local Africans and the Indian Community in South Africa. But an attempt is made to encourage Indian Christians from an indentured background in South Africa to connect with the pain and pathos of poor communities in South Africa. This thesis encourages the Indian Christians in South Africa to read Dalit theology and get involved with Black theologians to build a Christian resource to work towards building a reconciled society in new South Africa.

I have offered a case study based on my work with Anglican Parish of Christ the Saviour Lenasia. I had discovered that Indian Christians have the developing ability and capacity to become a spiritual resource to work towards reconciliation and building a transformed and transforming society in South Africa. I could see in them 'wounded healers' and for me this is a powerful impact of religious conversion on their cultural identity. A 'victim' now has the capacity to act as a 'wounded healer'.

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NOTES

Chapter One

Mass Movements – The term mass movements refer to conversions of many groups into Christianity. The term used during British India was indicative of those movements developed within a group of people to which they or their ancestors belonged and had converted to Christianity. There is no trace of this term in missionary reports until 1892. The wiser choice of the term for conversions in India could be 'group movements' rather than 'mass movements'.

Proseletization – A term generally used by those who criticise the conversion of people from one faith to another. The term indicates that people are converted with unfair ways by religion through material help. The term is also used to describe conversions as coercive and unfair.

Dalit –   The term in its Sanskrit and Hebrew root and usage means 'broken', 'downtrodden'. The term broadly includes all the oppressed people. Today in India the term Dalit is also used to exclusively relate to the one fifth of Indian population which is placed outside the caste system of India.

Dalit Theology – It relates to the experiences and expressions of the excluded groups from caste system in India and their struggles for social justice and search for meaningful life in the community.

Caste System – There is great debate by anthropologists and historian about the origin of caste system in India. However for the understanding of this thesis caste system is described as it is being practiced in India by Hindu society. Indian society is generally divided into four major groups or castes or classes and the fifth group is identified as untouchables or out caste. Untouchables and outcastes call themselves Dalit in India.

Apartheid System – The policy of racism in South Africa. It was enunciated by the National Party in 1948.

Conversion – A radical change in personal religious beliefs and behaviour. It broadly can be understood as both personal and communal change in community affiliation.

Chapter Two

Aryans – It is said that Aryan is a linguistic group from Indo-European origin. But in India people of upper caste take pride in calling themselves as Aryan race. They were believed to be nomadic people who came and capture the local inhabitants of India. It is said that Aryans have developed Hindu religion in India. They developed 'Sanskrit' language in India.

Dravidians – They are believed to be the native Indians who were conquered by Aryans. They were made subject by the ruling Aryans and are mainly located in South India. From amongst Dravidian we find many Dalit people. They are also called Tamil people. Their language is 'Tamil'.

Vedas – They are the sacred writings of Hindu religion. The Veda means 'knowledge of that which was before unknown'. There are four Vedas in Hindu religion. Rig Veda (is the oldest), The Sama Veda, The Yajur Veda and the Atharva Veda. They consist of formulas and spells.

Brahmanas – They are also sacred writings associated with Vedas. Brahmanas contain ritual instructions. They also include the Aranyakas or forest books arising from the reflection of the rituals.
Upanishads – They are also sacred writings associated with Vedas. They are commentaries of Vedas.

Chapter Five

Abbreviations:

Ang.   Anglican

Abs.   Absconding from estate or employer

d.   died

n. d.   no date

LC   Left colony, destination unknown (no application for license traced)

LCcL   Left colony without License

RI   Returned to India

WM   Wesleyan - Methodist

RC   Roman Catholic

VAFP Voluntarily abandoned free passage

Symbols

ξ   Special servant imported to work for a hotel, club etc. Usually possessed certain skills.

π Passenger, not indentured Indian

∗   Identification of denomination (either positive or very probable) made in church register or other document

λ   Recorded as pariah or panchama in caste column, but believed to be a Christian because of name or for other reasons

? (in denomination column): name occurs in records of the denomination, but cannot be positively linked with this individual

ψ   Denomination stated in the shipping lists

No.	Name	Age	Sex	Place of Origin	Denomination	Subsequently
	Year:1860-Ship:Truro-From Madras - Arrived Nov.16, 1860 - entries 1 – 342					
5	**Abraham (record incomplete)**	38	M	Madras	WM or Anglican	
6	**Sarah (record incomplete)**	30	F	Madras	WM or Anglican	
7	**Esack (Abraham)**	10	M	Madras	WM or Anglican	VAFP; d. 1928
9	**Arlando (Abraham)**	5	M	Madras	WM or Anglican	
10	**Ragael (Abraham)**	2	F	Madras	WM or Anglican	
83	**Palium (Perumall)**	22	F	Madras	Anglican?	Diamond Fields 1871
103	**Cundasaumy (Veerasaumy)**	22	M	Achchapoorum	Anglican	
111	**S . Sadriapen (Ramasaumy)**	4	M	Achchapoorum	Anglican?	Diamond Fields 1872
214	**Royapen (Daniel)**	12	M	Trichinopoly	Anglican	Diamond Fields 1873
218	**Veerapen (Colapen)**	19	M	Fervator,Chingleput	Anglican?	Diamond Fields 1872
250	**Nynee Henwood (Vencatasaumy)**	45	M	Madras	Anglican?	VAFP
252	**Vencatasaumy (Ellapen)**	13	M	Madras	Anglican or WM	RI-Umvoti-1874
254	**Ellapen (Chrinathro)**	29	M	Chingleput	Anglican?	Ri-Helen-Wallace 1866
268	**Chinamah(Pamapen)**	16	F	Madras	Anglican?	Diamond Fields 1873
269	**Ramasaumy**	22	M	Vellore	Anglican?	Died n.d.;doubt about religion
272	**Vencatasaumy (Kiythapen)**	27	M	Madras	WM or	Diamond Fields 1872

				Anglican	
273	**Sanee or Jane (Abraham)**	16	F	Madras	Anglican?	
301	**Chinapen(Migale)**	7	M	Chingleput	Anglican?	Abs.;Ri-1871
302	**Chinamah(Migale)**	4	F	Chingleput	Anglican?	Abs.;Ri-1871
308	**Royapen (Yasadian)**	34	M	Mysore *	Ang.	

Year: 1860 - ship: Lord George Bentinck - From Madras - arrived Dec. 24, 1860 - entries 685-965

894	**Esther or Ester (John)**	30	F	Aylem,Chittoor	Anglican?	

Year: 1863 - ship: Earl of Hardwick - from Madras - arrived sept.21, 1863 - entries 1593-1985

1718	**Curpoogo Veillee or Velli (John)**	4	F	Hindoostan,Mysore	Anglican?	RI-Umvoti-1874
1719	**Lazar (John)**	4mon	M	Hindoostan,Mysore	Anglican?	RI-1874
1725	**Ramasawmy (Ramasawmy)**	35	M	Chingleput	Anglican?	RI-Umvoti-1878
1749	**Moottoo (Putchay)**	32	M	Chittoor	Anglican?	RI-Umvoti-1874
1750	**Ayeamah (Anda alias Chemben)**	24	F	Chittoor	Anglican?	RI-Umvoti-1874
1751	**Chinee (Moottoo)**	6	F	Chittoor	Anglican?	RI-Umvoti-1874
1752	**Sadachee(Moottoo)**	3	F	Chittoor	Anglican?	RI-Umvoti-1874
1753	**Minien or Misuen (Moothoo)**	1	F	Chittoor	Anglican?	RI-Umvoti-1874
1753	**Thanacootee (Moothoo)**	34	F	Chittoor	Anglican?	LLC1888

Year: 1864 - ship: Rajasthana - from Madras - arrived Jan.21, 1864 –entries 2283-2611

2345	**Pamapen (Sunaysee)**	30	M	Chingleput *	Anglican	d.1882
2346	**Lazaramah(Yagen)**	26	F	Chingleput *	Anglican	
2347	**Marian(Pamapen)**	7	M	Chingleput *	Anglican	Diamond Fields1876; d. 1896

2348 **Mariamal(Pamapen)**	5	F	Chingleput *	Anglican	
2349 **Lazar (Pamapen)**	1	M	Chingleput *	Anglican	

Year: 1864 - ship: Ocean Chief - from Calcutta - arrived Oct.9, 1864 –entries 3551-3939

3624 **Henry (Nundoo)**	18	M	Benares	Anglican	

Year: 1864 -ship: Edmundsbury - from Madras - arrived Dec. 17, 1864 –entries 4297- 4 576

4349 **Sunpuel or Sunjoie (Mylapen)**	34	M	Madras	Anglican	d.1869
4350 **Andrew (Sunpuel or Sunjoie)**	12	M	Madras	Anglican	d.1895
4351 **Robert (Mylapen)**	9	M	Madras	Anglican?	d.1865

Year: 1865 - ship: Ardbeg - from Madras - arrived June.30, 1865 –entries 4924-5236

4988 **Umanee (Royapen)**	8	F	Madras *	Anglican?	
4989 **Chinasuamy (Royapen)**	6	M	Madras *	Anglican?	LLC 1887; d. 1924
4990 **Umboo (Royapen)**	4	M	Madras	Anglican?	LLC 1888
4991 **AuroKium (Royapen)**	6m on	M	Madras	Anglican?	LLC 1887; d. 1939

Year: 1878 - ship: Inveravon I - arrived Aug.10,1878 –entries 18763-19133

18969 **Michael (Gnanaprakasam)**	30	M	Vellore	Ang?	
19104 **Aurokiam (Gnanaprakasam)**	20	M	Vellore	Ang?	LLC 1894; d. 1934
1930 **Aroolapan (Rayappan)**	35	M	Madras	Ang?	RI - Umvoti - 1880

Year: 1879 - ship: Vimeira II - from Madras - arrived Sept. 1, 1879 –entries 21 504 -21876

21573 Isaac Daniel (Bedanayagam)	25	M	Tinnevelly	Ang?	LLc 1885; d. 1936
21574 **Chinnamma (Jacob)**	25	F	Tinnevelly	Ang?	d. 1947
21575 **Royappn (Chinnasamy)**	30	M	Tinnevelly	Ang?	d.1903

21679	**George William (George)**	32	M	Madras	Ang?	
21872	**Robert Hoover (Hoover)**	20	M	Madras	Ang or RC	
Year: 1879 - ship: carnatic I - from madras - arrived Nov. 11, 1879 –entries 21 877-22 244						
21886	**David (Devabhakthadu)**	23	M	Cuddapah	Ang?	RI - Pongola - 1897
21887	**Marian (Veriah)**	18	F	Cuddapah	Ang?	RI - Pongola -1889
21888	**Soloman (Kondadu)**	24	M	Cuddapah	Ang?	RI - Umvoti - 1886
21890	**Jakkeria (Obigadu)**	23	M	Cuddapah	Ang?	
21891	**Nagammah (Hanumanah)**	18	F	Cuddapah	Ang?	
21892	**Nagi (Hanumanah)**	14	F	Cuddapah	Ang?	
22002	**Samuel (Thammiah)**	18	M	Cuddapah	Ang?	
22003	**John (Tammayah)**	25	M	Cuddapah	Ang?	LCcL 1884
22004	**Chinthadre (Covali Pillay)**	25	F	Cuddapah	Ang?	d. +- 1891
22005	**Kristnee (Veerasamy)**	25	F	Cuddapah	Ang?	
Year: 1878 - ship: Zenobia - from Madras - arrived Oct. 9, 1878 –entries 20322-20774						
20396	Samuel (Savoothian)	25	M	Nilgiri Hills	Ang?	LLC 1897; d. 1924
Year: 1880 - ship: Mars I – from madras - arrived Nov. 16, 1880 – entries 23 081 – 23412						
23119	**Mareeyan (Arecum)**	12	M	Benares	Ang?	
23127	**Mareyama (Mark)**	20	F	Benares	Ang?	
Year: 1880 - ship: Umvoti VI - from Madras - arrived Aug. 8, 1880 –entries 22 560-22 768						
22670	**Thomas (Mark)**	35	M	Madras	Ang?	
Year: 1883 - ship: coldstream I - from Madras - arrived apr. 19, 1883 – entries 28 132-28453						
28164	**Marian (Rayapen)**	40	M	Tanjore	Ang?	
Year: 1884 - ship: Laurel I - from Madras - arrived Sept. 27, 1884 –entries 32 571-32 871						
28164	**Marian (Rayapen)**	40	M	Tanjore	Ang?	
Year: 1884 - ship: Laurel I - from Madras - arrived Sept. 27, 1884 –entries 32 571-32 871						
32616	**Jacob (Thomas)**	30	M	arcot (north)	Ang?	LCcL 1894; d. 1915
32 617	**Christina (Thomas)**	26	F	arcot (north)	Ang?	d. 1943
32618	**Samuel (Jacob)**	1	M	arcot (north)	Ang?	d. 1943
Year: 1889 -ship: Taif - from Madras - arrived Apr. 4, 1889 - entries 37 306-37 717						

37 386	**Sebastian (Devasagayan)**	16	M	Travancore *	Ang.	RI - Umkuzi - 1922

Year: 1889 - ship: Umvoti XXIII - from Madras - arrived June 16, 1889 –entries 38 082-38 321

38 216	**Thomas Ellai (Samcivalu)**	16	M	Tinnevelly	Ang?	

Year: 1889 -ship: Congella II - from Madras - arrived aug. 15, 1889 – entries 38 657-39 062

38838	**Daniel Naidoo (Chinnappa)**	25	M	Chingleput	Ang?	LLC 1899; d. 1963

Year: 1889 -ship: Congella III - from Madras - arrived Nov. 10, 1889 –entries 39 830-40 212

40102	**Royappan (Arokkiam)**	17	M	Trichinopoly	Ang.?	RI - Umona - 1924

Year: 1891 -ship: Umtata V - from madras - arrived June 28, 1891 –entries 46 534-47 070

46 596	**Arogiam (Mariam)**	28	F	Cuddapah	Ang.?	d. 1891
46 869	**Mannelu (Simson)**	25	M	Chingleput *	Ang.	LLC 1902
46 870	**Gnamammal (Veerappen)**	18	F	Chingleput *	Ang.	RI - Pongola - 1902
47 062	**B.S. David (S. Sbbiah)**	30	M	Cuddapah *	Ang.	d. 1894
47 063	**Meriam (Evariah)**	24	F	Cuddapah *	Ang.	

Year: 1891 - ship: Congella X - from Madras - arrived Dec. 19, 1891 –entries 47 321-47 714

47 397	**Michael (Micheul)**	22	M	Rajahmundry	Ang.?	RI - Umholoti - 1916
47 461	**Mary (Chinasamy)**	18	F	Chingleput	Ang.?	
47 544	**Moses (Meichael)**	22	M	arcot (North)	Ang.?	LLC 1903; d. 1924
47 545	**Arockiam (Savari)**	20	F	arcot (North)	Ang.?	LLC 1903; d. 1924
47	**Madurain (Lazar)**	40	M	Madras	Ang.?	ξ

713						

Year: 1892 - ship: Pongola X - from Madras - arrived July 23, 1892 – entries 50 244-50 655

. 50649	**R. D. Iyasoo (R, David)**	25	M	Madras *	Ang.	sign - check

Year: 1893 - ship: Umzinto III - from Madras - arrived in march. 10, 1893 –entries 52 066-52 351

52178	**Adam (Marian)**	20	M	Chingleput *	Ang.	RI - Umfuli - 1917

Year: 1893 - ship: Umzinto V - from Madras - arrived Dec. 10, 1893 –entries 53 412-53 861

53861	**Lily Samuel (Mumbasamy)**	28	F	Madras	Ang?	

Year: 1895 -ship: Congella XIX - from Madras - arrived June 2, 1895 – entries 58 892-59231

59225	**James Brass (George)**	32	M	Madras	Ang?	LLC 1914; RI - Umkuzi - 1915

Year: 1895 -ship: Umzinto X - from Madras - arrived Dec. 14, 1895 – entries 59 942-60 213

60070	**Davasagayam (Soloman)**	23	M	Chingleput *	Ang.	d. 1935
60207	**Mariyadoss(Manuel)**	22	M	Chingleput	Ang?	
60208	**Christina (Manuel)**	22	F	Chingleput	Ang?	

Year: 1869 - ship: Umzinto XII - from Madras - arrived June 29, 1896 –entries 62 547 - 63 006

62835	**A. Arakiayasami(Ross)**	24	M	Madras	Ang?	RI - Umkuzi - 1906
62836	**Mariya Kannamma(Lazaar)**	26	F	Madras	Ang?	d. n. d.
62837	**Parija Nayagani(Ross)**	11	F	Madras	Ang?	d. 1945
62838	**Kothary (Arokiasaumi)**	9	M	Madras	Ang?	RI Umholoti- 1907
62839	**Anthonii Amma (Ross)**	7	F	Madras	Ang?	

Year: 1897 - ship: Umlazi VII - from Madsras - arrived Nov. 1, 1897-entries 68 988 - 69520

69509	**Thamboo (Joseph)**	19	M	Madras (S.to check)	Ang.	d.1924 (sign)
69514	**C.Thomas (Jamson)**	32	M	Chingleput	Ang?	RI-Umona-1902 ξ

Year: 1897- ship: Pngola XXVI - from Madras - arrived Nov. 30, 1897 - entries 69 521-69 889

69883	**C. Davasagayam**	36	M	Madras	Ang?	ξ

	(Kolappen)					
Year:1898 - ship: Umlazi X - from Madras - arrived Aug. 2, 1898 - entries 73 670-74212						
74063	**Samuel (Venkatigadu)**	30	M	Cuddapoah	Ang?	RI-Umkuzi - 1908
74064	**Santamma(Gangiah)**	25	F	Cuddapah	Ang?	RI-Umkuzi - 1908
74065	**Nagammah (Samuel)**	4	F	Cuddapah	Ang?	RI-Umkuzi - 1908
Year:1898 - ship: pongola XXIX - from Madras - arrived Sept. 7, 1898 - entries 74 213-74589						
74258	**Charlie (Sankara Hassan)**	24	M	Coimbatore	Ang?	d. 1818
Year: 1900 - ship: Congella XXX - from Madras - arrived Mar. 21, 1900 - entries 77 989-78 364						
78100	**Munsami Pillai (A. pillai0**	22	M	Chingleput	Ang?	LLC 1907-Lobito Bay
78354	**Manuel (Bellavanthram)** λ	21	M	Madaras	Ang?	d. 1907 ξ
78355	**Thomas (Chittray)** λ	32	M	Madras	Ang?	d. 1903 ξ
Year: 1900 - ship: Umkuzi III - from Madras - arrived May 29, 1900 - entries 78 839-79376						
79355	**M. Arokiyasamy (Michael)**	30	M	Madras	Ang?	d. 1903 ξ
79356	**M. Michael**	29	M	Madras	ang?	Invalid; RI-Pongola-1905 ξ
Year: 1901 - ship: Congella XXXIII - Madras - arrived May 3, 1901 - entries 85 149-85 508						
85499	**Henri (Lazar)**	30	M	Madras (sign)	Ang?	RI - Umkuzi-1906 (sign)
85500	**Marian (Lazar)**	30	M	Madras (sign)	Ang?	sign - check
Year: 1901 - ship: Umkzi VII - from madras - arrived May 17, 1901 - entries 85 509-86 060						
86055	**Simon (marian)**	21	M	Madras (sign)	Ang.?	d. 1955 sign
86056	**John Edward (Joseph)**	21	M	Madras (sign)	Ang?	sign - check
Year: 1901 - ship: Umlazi XIV - from Madras - arrived june 25, 1901 - entries 86 404-86 950						
86920	**(Thambu (David)**	25	M	Madras (sign)	Ang?	d. 1903 sign
Year: 1901 - ship: Pongola XXXVII - from Madras - arrived Aug. 16, 1901 - entries 87 316-87688						
87447	**Arokiyasam (aron)**	27	M	Madras	Ang.?	RI-Umsinga - 1927
Year: 1901 - ship: Umlazi XVI - from Madras - arrived dec. 11, 1901 - entries 89 814-90244						
90229	**George(Robert)**	20	M	Madras	Ang?	
Year: 1902 - ship: Congella XXXVIII - from Madras - arrived Oct. 25, 1902 - entries 95 579-95 897						

95856	**Annaram Joseph**	32	M	Cuddapah	Ang?	
95857	**Annpram Mariya (Piddugu)**	25	F	Cuddapah	Ang?	
95858	**J. Sudoss (A. Joseph)**	9	M	Cuddapah	Ang.?	
95859	**Naucharugadu (A. Joseph)**	7	M	Cuddapah	Ang.?	
95860	**Obi (A. Joseph)**	2	F	Cuddapah	Ang.?	
Year: 1903 - ship: Umzinto XXXI - from Madras - arrived Dec. 29, 1903 - entries 101 369-101 852						
101472	**Mathai (Chako)**	20	M	Travancore	Ang.	d. 1936
Year: 1904 - ship: Umkuzi XIV - from Madras - arrived Mar. 4, 1904 - entries 102 446-103 001						
102503	**Vedamanikam (S. Nathaniel)**	27	M	Bangalore	Ang. ?	d.1913
102657	**Arokiam (Joseph)**	19	M	Anantapur	Ang. ?	d. 1904
102926	**Amurtham Pillay (Thomas P)**	28	M	Chingleput	Ang. ?	RI - Umlazi - 1913
102927	**Antoniamma(Joseph P)**	23	F	Chingleput	Ang. ?	RI- Umalazi - 1913
102928	**Arokiam (Amurtham P)**	6	F	Chingleput	Ang. ?	RI - Umalazi - 1913
102929	**Rasamma (Amurtham P)**	3	F	Chingleput	Ang. ?	RI- Umalazi - 1913
102930	**Savariamma (amutham P)**	8M	F	Chingleput	Ang. ?	RI - Umlazi - 1913
Year: 1904 - ship: Umkuzi XV - from Madras - arrived may 22, 1904 - entries 103 590-104 190						
103962	**P. Rebeca (Pathross)**	17	F	Malabar	Ang. ?	RI - Umkuzi - 1909
103963	**P. Marri (Pathrose)**	16	F	Malabar	Ang. ?	RI - Umkuzi - 1909
Year: 1904 - ship: Congella XVI - from Calcutta - Calcutta - arrived May 24, 1904 – entries 104 191 - 104 533						
104896	**D. Andrew (David)**	24	M	Madras	Ang. ?	RI - Umfuli - 1909 sign
Year: 1904 - ship: Pngola XLVIII - from Madras - arrived July 23, 1904 - entries 105 285 – 105 633						
105285	**David George (P. George)**	30	M	Malabar	ang. ?	d. 1925
105369	**Padapudi Prakasam (P.David)**	20	M	Guntur	Ang. ?	RI - Umfuli - 1909
105416	**Samuel (A. Lorkas)**	25	M	Arcot (South)	Ang. ?	
105493	**Chennammal (Chennappa)**	26	F	arcot (North)	Ang. ?	RI - Umfuli - 1909

105494	**Rajammal (Thomas)**	9	F	Arcot (north)	Ang. ?	RI - Umfuli - 1909

Year: 1904 - ship: Umlazi XXIV - from Madras - arrived Dec. 2, 1904 – entries 108 529-109 037

109010	**Chinthala Daniel (Obigadu)**	24	M	Kurnool	Ang. ?	RI - Umfuli - 1909
109011	**Martha (Veerijadu)**	20	F	Kurnool	Ang. ?	RI - Umfuli - 1909

Year: 1905 - ship: Umkuzi XXI - from Madras - arrived Oct. 25, 1905 - entries 115 564-116 165

116129	**A. L. Thomas (A. anantharay) 29**		M	Bangalore	Ang. ?	Invalid; RI - Umzinto - 1910 sign

Year: 1905 - ship: Umfuli I - from Madras - arrived Nov. 27, 1905 - entries 116 166-116 727

116201	**Gnanaprakasam (Abraham)**	21	M	TinnevellyAng?	Ang. ?	

Year: 1906 - ship: Umfuli IV - from Madras - arrived Sept. 14, 1906 - entries 125 484-125 809

125518	**Marian (Michael)**	22	M	Arcot (North)	Ang. ?	RI - Umona - 1928

Year: 1907 - ship: Umfuli VI - from Madras - arrived Jan. 14, 1907 - entries 129 111-129 657

129335	**Fomel (Ghyana Sunigadu)**	24	M	Cuddapah	Ang. ?	RI - Umsinga - 1926

Year: 1907 - ship: Pongola LX - from Madras - arrived Mar. 19, 1907 - entries 130 596-130 871

130695	**Asirvatham (Philip)**	25	M	Travancore	Ang. ?	d. 1945

Year: 1910 - ship: Umfuli XIII - from Madras - arrived May 10, 1910 - entries 142 538-143 060

142592	**Samuel (Venkatigadu)**	35	M	Cuddapah	Ang. ?	d. 1931

Year: 1910 - ship: Umhloti V - from Madras - arrived June 27, 1910 - entries 143 548-144 125

143936	**Subbiah Roofui (Mariah)**	25	M	Cuddapah	Ang. ?	d. 1934
143937	**Kanthamma (Gengadu)**	19	F	Cuddapah	Ang. ?	d. 1949

Year: 1911 - ship: Umlazi XLIII - from madras - arrived July 21, 1911 - entries 151 724-152 184

152095	**A. Saramma (Saniah)**	20	F	Cuddapah	Ang. ?	
152096	**A. Sathiraju (A. Nathaniel)**	3	M	Cuddapah	Ang. ?	