

# The War Against Hinduism

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By Stephen Knapp

Over the years we have all heard about the many attempts that have been made in India to convert various sections of society from Hinduism to either Christianity or Islam. But only after one of my trips to India did I really get a much clearer understanding of what has been going on. Furthermore, most people, as well as many Indians, are not fully aware of how the war against Hinduism is happening, nor how serious it is. It is taking place on many levels, and because of this, in some areas the practice of Hinduism is declining rapidly.

When I was traveling in June of 2001, I had gone on a lecture tour, speaking every night at places like Mumbai, Nagpur, Warangal, Visakhapatnam, Vijayawada, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Trivandrum, and Chennai. So I had the chance to meet with many of the intellectuals and some of the spiritual leaders in these areas, and learned how conversion was a very hot issue.

Now I don't have anything in particular against Christianity itself. I was born and raised a Christian, so I know what it is, but also how they work. My main contention is when the teachings that are said to come from Jesus are twisted and misinterpreted into something that does not spread the genuine love of God and humanity that we are all supposed to develop, but becomes the dog-like barking and criticism against every other religion that is not Christian. This does not only go on toward every religion outside of Christianity, but also within it between Catholics and Protestants and other denominations. It seems that this faith has become not something that promotes our similarities for cooperation, but our differences in that everyone who is of an unrelated Christian denomination are all going to hell.

In regard to India, there is a great number of missionaries of various denominations who are working there right now, all competing for the most number of converts. The Southern Baptists alone are a group that has nearly 100,000 career missionaries in North India, all working to spread the "good word." We also find that in order to make converts from Hinduism some of the numerous Catholic priests in Southern India dress like sannyasis, and call their organizations ashramas. This is to make Christianity more similar to the Vedic traditions. Bharat Natyam dance is also taught in the Christian schools, but with Christian symbols and meanings replacing the Vedic. This is all in the attempt to actively sway Hindus over to Christianity.

One way they are trying to bring Christianity deep into the culture of India is by superimposing its rituals, symbols, and even types of dress on the Hindu forms of the same.

Thus, you will see the cross on the lotus, some priests dress in saffron, and some churches have the ambiance of a Hindu temple. If this keeps up, maybe one day Christianity will be more Hindu than Christian.

While traveling in the far Northeastern states of India I have seen some of the tactics that the Christian missionaries have used to help make converts, such as offering cheap polyester pants to the tribals of the Northeast if they become Christian, or even offer motor bicycles if they help convert their brothers, which also means their wives and family. In other places like Madhya Pradesh, as noted in the Neogy Report, the missionaries give small loans on interest to the tribals, who cannot pay back such loans easily. However, if they become Christian, then such loans and the interest are dismissed. This is what goes on in the democracy of India, and under the tolerance of the Hindus, while if one such incidence would ever occur in a Muslim country, the result would be an immediate expulsion of the missionary from that nation.

Another trick that has been done is that missionaries, while treating the sick, will give medicine of no value and ask the tribal to take it while offering prayers to his local deity. Naturally, no cure of disease is likely to occur with the useless medicine. Then the missionary gives the tribal real medicine and asks the tribal to take it while offering prayers to Jesus. Then when there is a recovery, it is attributed to the power of Christ and not to the medicine. Such conversion activities take place these days more often in the tribal areas under the guise of social service. However, true social service should be done without expecting anything in return, including conversion.

Another thing that takes place is mass healings at meetings similar to revivals. What they do is pay people to attend the healings portraying themselves as being sick, or invalids on crutches, etc., who then get called up and are miraculously cured of their disease. This is attributed to the power of Christ, which then convinces many tribals that they too can benefit in various ways if they become Christian. This has not had much of an effect amongst the Brahmana classes, but the lower classes who attend are more vulnerable and are impressed by such things, and are then swayed toward Christianity. This is why Christian conversion tactics have been focused more toward the tribal areas than other regions of India. So these conversions are not taking place due to pure preaching of the Bible or the message of Jesus, but are accomplished by trickery and the emphasis on material facility. This is, of course, what is being objected to by the general Hindu population. However, when or if people convert for purely spiritual reasons, then there is no objection.

Another way conversions are accomplished is with the promise to the Dalits or the lower caste Hindus that they will not have any more caste recognition by becoming Christians. However, after conversion many find out that this is not true. Even amongst the converted Christians there is found to be a caste mentality, with the lower castes forced to use separate doorways, separate seating, or have marriages performed only among equal caste Christians and in separate facilities, or to even be buried in separate cemeteries. When this becomes obvious to those who are newly converted, some of them want to come back to being Hindus again, which has been facilitated by such organizations as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP).

An interesting point is that in spite of these duplicitous ways of converting that the Christians have used, the Christian churches have threatened violence against the process of reconversion back to Hinduism that had been launched by the VHP. It is as if they do not want anyone to have the right to do what they are already doing. It was Rev. V. K. Nuh, secretary of the Nagaland Baptist Convention who said, "If someone tries to impose their faith, Christians in this region will not surrender. There will be a battle and we shall have no option. There will be a physical and religious war if attempts are made to propagate Hinduism by forceful means in the Northeast." In this same line of thinking, Rev. M.D. Oaugma, head of the Garo Baptist Convention of Meghalaya said, "It could be a threat to Christianity if we remain silent to the VHP's game plan of mass conversion. We shall have to fight, we shall have to resist." (*Maharashtra Herald*, July 11, 1998)

Of course, it is easy for Hindus to be nonchalant toward other religions because they feel that each spiritual path takes you toward God. So in this light, it is alright to be tolerant of them or let them thrive. But the problem is that not all religions feel the same way toward Hinduism. Some feel that Hinduism is a culture that should be removed or destroyed. An example of this is that in Northeast India, in states like Assam, Nagaland, and Manipur, they have witnessed a surge of nearly 200% in their Christian population in the past 25 years due to the wily tactics of foreign missionaries. Their grasp is so strong now that practicing Hinduism is forbidden in some areas. Where is the democratic freedom in that? Hindus can no longer do worship or *arati* in the open because of the fanaticism in parts of the land. Durga *puja* has become almost obsolete as deities are destroyed or stolen in broad daylight. This confrontational climate has led to numerous militant outfits sponsored by the Church who are fighting for secession from India. So now the Northeastern portion of India wants to secede from it, and another part of India will be lost if this should happen.

If the Catholic Church in particular is supposed to espouse the message that God is love, and that it is by love of God and neighbor that mankind is saved, it certainly has not shown much of that kind of love toward any other religion. With the Pope's recent call for conversions in Asia, it certainly shows that it is not a friend of other religions, but still holds the goal that other spiritual paths should be brought down to be replaced by Christianity. This should be clearly understood. This is also the case with the Baptists and other denominations.

While I was in New Delhi, I also met with Mrs. Shanti Reddy, a member of a government agency called the National Committee for Women. She revealed that another thing that missionaries have done was to kidnap young Indian children. What one Christian missionary couple in Chennai was doing before they were arrested was to bribe tribals into giving their young baby girls to them. They would pay the tribals as little as 2000 to 5000 rupees for baby girls, and then turn around and sell the girls to foreigners for as much as \$30,000 to \$40,000. According to the records that had been confiscated from the missionaries' home, this had been a thriving business, and nearly 25 of such transactions had already taken place. The Indian authorities said they probably saved 300 baby girls from such a fate from the indications on the records they

found. So this has been another one of the forms of activities that such missionaries do for their own benefit and profit against the real interest of India. However, whenever Hindus react with force against such people, they are labeled as fundamentalists, antagonists, communalists, or worse. But how can you expect that Hindus should not display serious and violent reactions when such activities become obvious? It usually takes a lot to make Hindus react, as they are often most pacifistic and tolerant people. This is also why they make lousy terrorists, they just do not see things that way.

Nonetheless, another way that India is slowly losing its Vedic culture is through the process of secular or English and Christian education. Of course, in public schools all Vedic books have been removed from the curriculum. So there are no possibilities to study the ancient Indian literature or art in such institutions. So Vedic values are no longer part of what the children are taught. Furthermore, the Christian schools, often staffed by Christian missionaries, can teach Christian values in their classes, and include a short study of the Bible everyday, or the Koran if it's an Islamic school. The so-called secular government has even helped them with free land and facilities. Since these schools offer English in their education, along with good discipline, many of the middle classes of Indians are favoring sending their children to these schools. Today, in the Indian cities, many of the parents of children are the graduates of Christian schools, who also send their own children to such schools. As this trend continues, there will be a decreasing number of Hindus in the educated sector. Thus, children in India, with the help of the secular government, are learning Christian values and perceiving their own history and culture as something less than honorable. They are taught that such important books as the *Bhagavad-gita*, *Ramayana*, *Bhagavata Purana* and other Vedic texts are nothing more than mythology, and not a result of one of the most profound civilizations in the world. They are also taught that their own God is but a demon and the only real way to God is through Jesus.

An example of this is that a few devotees from the New Delhi Iskcon (Hare Krishna) temple go out and give presentations to the children's classes in schools. Some of the questions that are asked by the children are, "Who is your God?" and "hat can your God do for me?" and so on. Obviously, these questions are nothing but a direct result of the Christian and English oriented education that these children are receiving. Now I ask anyone, isn't this practically a covert form of conversion? This form of education indoctrinates the children to doubt their own culture, and disrespect their own history and traditions. As a result of this form of education, the Hindu population is slowly forgetting the unique history and lofty culture of their homeland.

As I traveled around, it was not unusual to see elementary schools around India with a name something like "Saint Xavier's School." People should know that this Francis Xavier, who is now one of the greatest so-called "saints," feverishly declared, "When I have finished baptizing the people, I order them to destroy the huts in which they keep their idols; and I have them break the statues of their idols into tiny pieces, since they are now Christians. I could never come to an end describing to you the great consolation which fills my soul when I see idols being destroyed by the hands of those who had been idolaters." (From "*The Letters and Instructions of Francis Xavier*," 1993,

pp 117-8) This was his goal, to destroy Indian culture and make India a Christian nation. So it is ironic that now India embraces the schools that honor him in this way. How could they not know his true intention?

What is often not recognized is that, up until recently, for the last 50 years the politicians who have been directing the destiny of India are the ones who have an anti-Hindu attitude. They have set the economic direction and the educational policies that the country has been forced to follow. They have also promised the protection of the religious minorities with the hopes of acquiring votes. This has been one of the reasons why the secularists in the Congress party have treated everything that is Hindu with disdain.

Another aspect of the loss of Vedic culture in India is that the younger Indian people, especially ages from 15 to 25, are readily giving up Vedic customs to follow the more decadent so-called freedoms of the West. They see the western movies, they read what the celebrities say in the papers, and they admire them and want to adopt their forms of dress and lifestyles. Thus, in the big cities like Mumbai you have Indian couples living together without marriage, which is something you never would have seen before a few years back. Now the Vedic principles are looked upon as something obsolete, something that restricts the style that those who look to the West want to adopt. Thus, they are leaving Indian traditions behind and losing respect for anything Vedic. In this way, they adopt foreign standards, or lose so much respect for Indian and Vedic values that they become embarrassed to admit their Hindu background and heritage. Furthermore, Sanskrit scholars at the temples are also slowly dying out, and the modern Indians view the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* as merely myths or gaudy television shows.

Although India has been invaded by outsiders so many times and has always survived, what we are talking about is more than mere property or geography. What is actually being threatened is the basis of Indian culture itself. As younger generations give up their Vedic heritage, even if they return to it later when they are older and looking for more philosophical support, with whatever percentage of loss occurs with each generation, time has shown that it is never fully recovered. A portion of it is lost forever.

Another way of looking at this is that India presently enjoys an 85% Hindu majority in its population. This may sound quite significant, but in actuality this includes 15% Buddhists, Sikhs, and Jains. So it is really only a 70% majority. How many more generations will go by before we see a big drop in this percentage due to the process of secular (meaning Christian or English, or even Islamic) education, or with the present rate of conversions by tactless Christians? This percentage could easily drop well below 50% in only a few more generations at the present rate of change.

How many more generations will it take before the Hindu majority is no longer a majority, but a minority in its own country? As Hinduism declines, you will see that the demands on the government and those voted into politics will also change, and the laws

will also alter more in favor of the increasing minority religions at the expense of declining Hinduism. Then as the years go by there will appear only small clusters of Hindu or Vedic communities, most likely centered around prominent holy places, until the more aggressive religions act in ways to diminish these as well, in the same way that they are presently doing in other countries.

The point of all this information is that it is time for all Hindus and supporters and followers of the Vedic culture, Sanatana-dharma, to realize what is actually happening and give up your timidness or nonchalance and speak out while such freedom still exists. We must become more pro-active for defending this culture. The point is that if you do not take it seriously, I can assure you that there are others who take this inaction and tolerance extremely seriously to promote their own goals and religions in India. It is because of this that India may not always remain the homeland of an active and thriving Vedic culture as it is now. We need to protect whatever is left of it and maintain the present liberties that Hindus or followers of Vedic culture still have in India. Then we all can continue to engage in Vedic traditions without hindrance, and with full freedom. For this, we need to unite ourselves in a concerted effort to make this happen. And it most certainly is possible.

Not long ago, as told to me by Professor Subhash Kak, it was noted in a reputable publication that now 1% of the Russian population claim that they are Hindu. The article stated that this was primarily due to the preaching efforts of Iskcon. This shows a major social impact. This shows what is possible if we can work together in a concerted effort. This is why I am convinced that if we all work in a pro-active way under the banner of a united family of Vedic followers, or Global Vedic Community, we can keep and even expand the present freedoms that we now have to practice Vedic and indigenous traditions, and keep India as the homeland of Vedic culture, the most ancient roots of humanity.

India must be protected and kept as the homeland and center of the Vedic heritage, Sanatana-dharma, Hinduism. Without it, what is its value, in spite of whatever else it accomplishes? The value of Hinduism and India are clearly expressed in the words of the famous English theosophist Dr. Annie Besant. She put great emphasis on the value of India, its history, the Vedic culture, and its importance to the world. As written in the cover notes from the book, *Hindus, Life-Line of India*, by G. M. Jagtiani, she says: "After a study of some forty years and more of the great religions of the world, I find none so perfect, none so scientific, none so philosophic, and none so spiritual as the great religion known by the name of Hinduism. The more you know it, the more you will love it; the more you try to understand it, the more deeply you will value it. Make no mistake; without Hinduism, India has no future. Hinduism is the soil into which India's roots are struck, and torn of that she will inevitably wither, as a tree torn out from its place. Many are the religions and many are the races flourishing in India, but none of them stretches back into the far dawn of her past, nor are they necessary for her endurance as a nation. Everyone might pass away as they came and India would still remain. But let Hinduism vanish and what is she? A geographical expression of the past, a dim memory of a perished glory, her literature, her art, her monuments, all have

Hindudom written across them. And if Hindus do not maintain Hinduism, who shall save it? If India's own children do not cling to her faith, who shall guard it? India alone can save India, and India and Hinduism are one."

In this light, it is absolutely necessary that as followers of Sanatana-dharma, Vedic culture, we realize that we need to repair whatever differences we have between us regarding whatever issues there may be. This is necessary in order to work with some cooperation with whomever we can if we expect to be a substantial force in defending the Vedic cause. Otherwise, all the issues that invariably come up, although these should not be ignored, should not take so much of our attention that our preaching or sharing or promoting of our culture stops. Otherwise, we will only serve as contributors to the continuing deterioration of all spiritual standards as the age of Kali-yuga progresses. This preaching, of course, means that we must all stay in touch with and practice the Vedic standards, and be ready to let others know of its advantages, and to defend it from those who wish to see its demise.

We cannot allow ourselves to be led into the danger of endless debate that leads to inaction. We all must be pro-active in some way to help defend and spread Vedic culture. Then we can work together to keep the freedom we presently have to practice the Vedic traditions and keep India as the homeland of a thriving, dynamic, and still living tradition. Such freedom does not come without its challenges, and we must be prepared as a society to meet those challenges. To take such freedoms for granted means that it's only a matter of time before they are lost. And that is exactly what some people want to happen. So we must be willing to work all the harder to prevent such a decline of our Vedic heritage.