

Uprooting of Ancestry

By

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Any natural born Indian whose recent forbears had been converted to christianity will face problems of a serious nature in case he still has memories, whether conscious or unconscious, of his Hindu roots. These problems will be all the more acute if the christianity that his recent christian ancestor had assumed was of the western kind. Eastern christianity was the first christianity in India. It co-existed with Hinduism. The problem began with the coming of western christianity. It was hostile to the religion of the land. It was arrogant in its attitude to that religion and its followers. It insulted the Hindu rulers face down although their open-handed generosity had given to it its first foothold in the country. It directly called them worshippers of the devil. It expressly revelled in vengeance against them for the crime of not giving up their religion in favour of christianity. It told them point-blank that they would be cast in eternal hellfire and that it would witness their torments there at the time of the supposed end of the world.

Most people converted to western christianity in India are totally uprooted from their Hindu past even in one lifetime. Nothing is left to chance by the army called the clergy and the women's brigade known as nuns. Each one of these has scores of differently named and differently organised units. But they all function with the single basic objective of uprootment. The operation begins with baptism of the newborn. The child is given a name chosen not by the parents but by the cleric. He chooses the name from a list of supposed saints. This is obligatory. To ensure adult involvement, two grown-ups, one male and the other female, stand as guarantors. They get the title of godfather and godmother. It is their duty to see that the baptised child does not revert to his Hindu roots in the slightest. Their obligation continues for years. When the boy or girl is eight or nine, there is the further uprooting cult known as confirmation, when a new godfather takes over from the old one. This man is responsible for the ward's rootless upbringing until his marriage. The process continues until death. The relatives are then duty bound to call in the waiting cleric to impose what is known as the last rites of uprootment. Some elderly woman from the neighbourhood loudly repeats in the dying, or already dead, man's ears the formula of final dismemberment. Interesting it is that none of these cults, neither baptism, nor confirmation, nor the so-called last rites, was practised in eastern christianity in India before the coming of western christianity. They practised instead their original Hindu ways of living and worship. Some have survived even to our days. A notable example is Koratti in the former Cochin kingdom. An image of Siva was instinctively worshipped in the church there even to recent times. It is next to impossible in the above circumstances for any person however sensitive to retain for long any remnants of his ancestral past. He is promptly branded as an abnormal by the local western Christian clergy hood.

They absorb and circulate rumours about him that reach them through the confession channel or directly from informants and busybodies. They lie in wait for opportunities to wreak vengeance. Opportunities come in plenty since the clergymen control schools and colleges in Kerala. They also controlled all intellectual activity. These were characterised by them as vanity. Any individual interested in the pursuit of scientific or academic knowledge was refused seats and employment as a teacher or a clerk in their institutions. Knowing this well

enough, many affect to be obedient flunkeys. This affectation in course of time turns into their second nature.

It is no less difficult for him at home especially in his boyhood. If his father happens to be employed as a teacher in a clergy-controlled school, the boy is persecuted no end. Most of the time it is in the form of nagging.

Sometimes he is also starved or thrashed. Unknowingly urged by his Hindu instincts, the boy may go once in a while to some nearby temple to watch the yearly festival there in wonderment or to listen frankly to a discourse. He is then kept out of the house for the night. In all this, the father is activated by the animus against Hinduism vigorously pursued by western christianity all along. Such animus is the underlying bedrock of western christianity in India. In one characteristic instance, it is ordained in so many words that even mere passive watching of a Hindu temple festival or rite is a sin of the gravest magnitude. It is of course pre-ordained that a person who happens to die immediately afterwards will be in hell forever.

In the four or five centuries since the appearance of western christianity in our midst, these embargoes on ancestry have become part of the genetic makeup of every individual member of that tribe. Behind all their formulations, written as well as unwritten, behind even their gestures can be noticed this one venom against their own ancestors. They have lost their sense of ancestry.

After all, this is one of the senses that differentiate man from animals. Of course, it is also recoupable with the instrument of correct knowledge.

Most people have succumbed to the persecution. One or two have held forth against odds of every kind. To them is reserved a special cell in the cemetery, known as scoundrel's pit. The surviving relatives beseech the awaiting clergy for "respectable" burial. Cremation is unthinkable by reason of their ingrained loss of ancestry. Better still is the pit above mentioned.

The person thus buried bears posthumously the label of scoundrel for all time in his community. One well-known case concerns a professor famous in his time as an educationist and author. He was dismissed from his college for his non-conformism. He died at a comparatively young age and came to be buried in the scoundrel's pit. A more recent case concerns a man of 42. He had been converted but had soon resumed the religion of his ancestors. He died in an accident and was offered burial in the scoundrel's pit by the spying cleric. Relatives refused the offer. A Hindu neighbour thereupon let the landless man be buried in his own homestead. He was saved from the posthumous label of scoundrel.