

Bachelor of Arts (First Year)

Subject: Sociology Paper Code: SOGE 102

Course: Religion and Society in India

Unit: 03

Module Name: Major religions in India- Christianity

Module No: 11

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- ✓ Christianity is the biggest religion of the mankind judged in terms of its followers founded in the first century A.D. by Jesus of Nazareth (the Christ)
- ✓ The religion has 2000 years of history and is spread over all the parts and concerns of the world.
- ✓ There are several sects and groups within Christianity.
- ✓ India there are 18.8 million (1991)
- ✓ Christianity entered India during the first century A.D.
- ✓ St. Thomas and St. Bartholomew are believed to have brought Christianity to India in 50-52 A.D.

- ✓ St. Thomas reached the southern coast of Malabar and started his missionary.
- ✓ When Portuguese arrived in India, Christianity was found to have spread to the seventeen kingdoms in which Kerala was also included.
- ✓ Christians missionaries of the west used various means of attracting people to their faith.
- ✓ The Italian Jesuit Robert de Nobili, who reached Goa in 1605 and died in Madras in 1656, resorted to unconventional methods of spreading the faith. By the end of the 17th century, de Nobili and his associates had made 150,000 converts.

- ✓ The associations of the church with the Portuguese, the Dutch, the British and the French helped the later development of Christianity in India.
- ✓ Considerable humanitarian work was done by Christian missionaries of different nationalities and denominations.
- ✓ Besides Kerala and Tamil Nadu, there were pockets of Christianity in most of the Indian states.
- ✓ **Geographic Distribution of the Christians.**
- ✓ According to the 1991 census report, there are about 18.8 millions Christians in India consisting 2.23% of the total population.
- ✓ Of the total Christians in India, about 2/5th are Roman Catholic; 1/8th Romo-Syrians. 1/9th belong to the Anglian body; 1/11th are Jacobites and 1/12th Baptists.
- ✓ The Southern states of A.P., Tamil Nadu and Kerala together amount for nearly 60% of the Christians population in India.
- ✓ In Goa (32%) and Maharashtra also they are found in a sizeable number.
- ✓ Speaking about the geographic distribution of the Christians, about 2/3rd of the total Christians are found concentrated in South India, particularly in the states of Andhra Pradesh (2.09%).
- ✓ The southern states of A.P; Tamil Nadu and Kerala together amount for nearly 60% of the Christian population in India.
- ✓ In Goa (32%) and Maharashtra also they are found in a sizeable number.
- ✓ In Assam (7.15%); Orissa (1.73%) and Bihar (1.17%) also they are concentrated in some areas.
- ✓ In the north-eastern territories they are a dominant force.
- ✓ In Meghalaya (67%), Nagaland (67%) and Mizoram, they constitute the majority.
- ✓

Impact of Christianity on Indian Society:

In the social sphere the influence of Christianity has comprehended much of the social organization since it has effected the family, marriage, caste system, modes of dress, living, and life in general.

- ✓ Influence on Family.
- ✓ In the main, Christian influence on Indian families is evident in the breakdown of the joint family, growth of progressively smaller families, reduction in male dominance within the family, growth of

independence of women and general instability of the family institution as such Awakening in Women.

As a result of Christian influence and teaching, a new awakening began to spread among the women of India, and the westernized education that they received made them self-reliant and effective competitors of men in all fields. Apart from this many of our women took over the western mode of dress.

✓ Effect on caste System.

One of the major advantages of Christian influence has been the reduction in the sense of untouchability, and this was achieved by the untouchable caste.

- ✓ The untouchables got converted to Christianity so that they could equal the higher castes. This helped to remove the superstition from many Indian eyes and there is no general expression of the feeling of untouchability. Effect on Life in General.

Influence of Christianity can be seen in every sphere of Indian life, changes in the dietary habits, use of furniture, improvement in the standard of living, dress, interest in hair styles, use of cosmetics, mode of greeting and a hundred and one other forms.

Many of the changes listed above can be seen among Indians who belonged here many hundreds of years ago, but in the present times these changes are the result of Christian influence.

✓ Conversion.

One immediate effect of Christian religion was that many Hindus changed their religion, but then the more intelligent among the Hindus felt impelled to modify their own religion. Besides, the Christians initiated numerous movements aiming at social and religious reform within the country, the more important groups being the BrahmoSamaj, PrarthanaSamaj, Ramakrishna Mission and Theosophical Society. It was left to the Arya Samaj to protect Hindu religion.