

[Catholic Ashrams](#)

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Adopting And Adapting Hindu Dharma; Reconciliation is Underway, but Serious Obstacles Remain in the Dialogue Between Two Great Faiths

The Shantivanam ashram looks like a rishi's home transported from Vedic times to the banks of the sacred Cauvery River at a forested place near Trichy in South India. A pilgrim's first impressions are strong, and very Hindu: the elaborately colorful Hindu shrine; the bearded, saffron-robed "swami" seated cross-legged on a straw mat; devotees practicing yogic meditations, even chanting Hindu scriptures.

But these impressions gradually prove false. First, the eye detects that the courtyard shrine is for Saint Paul and that "puja" is actually a daily Mass, complete with incense, arati lamps, flower offerings and prasadam. Finally, one meets the "swami", learning he is Father Bede "Dayananda" Griffiths, a Christian "sannyasin" of impeccable British background.

This is a Christian ashram, one of more than 50 in India, which are variously described as "experiments in cross-cultural communication," "contemplative hermitages that revolve around both Christian and Hindu ideas," or (less charitably) "institutions to brainwash and convert India's unwary masses." Are these places to be endorsed by Hindus as worthy attempts to share each other's spirituality? Or are they a spiritual oxymoron, a contradiction of terms, because the Christians are interested in sharing - dialogue is the term they use - only as a means to conversion?

This special Hinduism Today report will focus on the issue of Catholic adoption and adaptation of those things that Hindus regard as their sacred heritage and spirituality, a policy the Catholics have named "inculturation." It is a complex issue involving doctrine, cultural camouflage, allegedly deceptive conversion tactics and more. Many Catholics will be perplexed by the issue raised in this report. They don't see what could be wrong with their selectively embracing those parts of Hindu spiritual discipline and culture which they find inspiring. And many Hindus,

raised on decades of uncritical acceptance of any form of religious expression, may simply not care one way or the other.

Hindu leaders are more and more aware that the Indianization of Christianity is a serious matter. They remember the fate of the American Indian religion and the native spiritual traditions of Africa and South America. More recently they recall that the Hawaiian people who numbered nearly 500,000 a century ago, are now less than 50,000 - their culture gone, their language spoken by a mere 500 people and their gods worshipped by a dying handful of kahuna priests. All this was the effective and intentional bequest of a few dedicated Christian missionaries - good people who thought their work necessary and divinely ordained. The purpose which drove these early missionaries to eliminate non-Christian faiths and cultures has not changed. It has become more subtle, more articulately argued. It is certainly more of a problem to Africans, but India's Hindus would do well to remain alert and informed. That is why it is essential to examine and understand such places as Father Bede's Shantivanam.

Shantivanam

Father Bede Griffiths is widely respected among Christians and Hindus alike. In the West the Catholics hold him in awe, a present-day saint whose lifetime association with the great religious traditions of ancient India is considered a courageous pioneering.

Shantivanam's brochure describes its objectives: "The aim of the ashram remains to establish a way of contemplative life, based alike on the traditions of Christian monasticism and of Hindu sannyasa. Hinduism has a tradition of sannyasa - 'renunciation' of the 'liberation' - which goes back many centuries before the birth of Christ and has continued to the present day. Our aim at Shantivanam is to unite ourselves with this tradition as Christian sannyasis. Our life is based on the Rule of Saint Benedict, the patriarch of Western monasticism [the Ashram is an official monastery of the Camaldolese Monks, founded in the 13th century in Italy], and on the teaching of three monastic Fathers of the Church, but we also study Hindu doctrine (Vedanta) and make use of Hindu methods of prayer and meditation (yoga). The ashram seeks to be a place of meeting for Hindus and Christians and people of all religions or none, who are genuinely seeking God."

The residents of the ashram are generally Europeans, some of whom are initiated into "sannyas" by Father Griffiths and then return to their own countries. Others are novices of the order, sent for exposure to this way of life. All participate fully in the Indian life style of the place.

A November, 1984 article in The Hindu newspaper, published in Madras, describes some of the ashramites. "A psychologist by profession, a young lady from W. Germany, Maria, said she visited the ashram annually. Before her experiencing this atmosphere here, she taught that the Bible has no message for her and now after studying the Vedanta here she could now say that her attitude towards the Bible and Christ had undergone total transformation. She felt that there was nothing wrong with the Christian religion. Mr. Desmond, a young lad from Bombay and a drug addict said that after coming to the Ashram he was a transformed man and when he returned to Bombay after Christmas he would be a reformed man." The article goes on to say Father Griffith had so far initiated 20 to 30 persons belonging to different nations as sanniyasis and sanniyasinis and all of them were spreading the message of this peaceful coexistence of the Trinity and non-duality in their own countries."

The limits of Father Griffiths' experiment in inculturation are apparent in his theological stance on certain central Hindu beliefs: reincarnation, moksha and cycles of time. He has not adopted any Hindu beliefs which would be considered heretical by the Catholic Church. In a 1984 interview by Renee Weber published in ReVision magazine, Father Griffiths said, "I consider reincarnation one of the most difficult doctrines to reconcile with Christian faith. According to popular belief the individual soul passes from body to body in a series of rebirths. I consider this entirely unacceptable from a Christian point of view." In regard to transcendent experience, the merging of the soul in God, the Moksha of Hindu theology, Renee Weber asked, "Was there this extraordinary openness and capacity for self-transcendence precisely in Jesus? Or can it happen again?" Father Griffiths replied, "In the Christian understanding, we would say no. He was open to the total reality of God. The rest of us have varying degrees of openness to the divine." Another area of difficulty is time. Hinduism conceives of time as vast cycles of creation and dissolution. Father Griffiths' concept is that time is strictly linear, starting at one point in the past and ending at one point in the future, never repeating itself.

Though not covered in that particular interview, Father Griffiths would also have had to affirm his concept of God confirmed with the five anathemas against pantheism stated by Vatican I and left unaltered by Vatican II. An anathema is a

forbidden belief, a belief which contradicts the Catholic teaching. These forbidden five are : "1) Nothing exists except matter. 2) God and all things possess one and the same substance and essence. 3) Finite things, both corporeal and spiritual, or at least spiritual, emanated from the divine substance. 4) The divine essence becomes all things by a manifestation or evolution of itself. 5) God is universal or indefinite being, which by determining itself makes up the universe, which is diversified into genera, species and individuals." The Catholic Church forbids its priests to believe or preach any of these concepts, several of which are, of course, standard parts of most Hindu theologies. This shows that on the most central issue of theology - God - there is a vast chasm between Catholic and Hindu belief.

Father Griffiths is an anomaly - a Hindu on the outside, a Catholic on the inside. And he's not the only one.

Jeevandara Ashram

Jeevandara Ashram, another Catholic ashram which is near Rishikesh in northern India, was founded by Ishapriya (Sister Patricia Kinsey) and Vandanath of the Society of the Sacred Heart. Considered the nun's equivalent of the Jesuits, this Order has 7,000 members worldwide and is deeply involved in education. Ishapriya was born in Britain, spent her novitiate in London and then a year in Rome. She was sent on mission to India where she was deeply impressed by the spiritual values of the country. She stayed on, first at the Divine Life Society in Rishikesh, studying and eventually, she says, taking sannyas diksha from Swami Chidananda. Vandanath was born in Bombay, ran away from home at 16 or 17, converted to Christianity and then entered the order, eventually becoming provincial (head) in India. She and Ishapriya took sannyas together and founded the ashram. Like Shantivanam, the majority of the people at the ashram are western Christians, usually Sacred Heart nuns. They are also involved in missionary efforts to convert Hindus in the local area. The ashram moved twenty miles north of Rishikesh due to objections by local Hindus.

A correspondent for Hinduism Today met briefly with Ishapriya in Carmel, California. She was conducting a six week retreat program in Ashtanga Yoga at the Angelica Convent. The white-haired nun, about 50, was dressed in a saffron sari and wore a large cross around her neck. Hinduism Today inquired if there is any Christianity in her teachings. She replied "Of course, there is Christianity in my teachings, I am a Catholic." We asked if she also teaches Catholicism in her ashram

in India. She said the Hindus who attend are aware that she is Christian. "There is no problem with that. They know that it is a Catholic ashram." Sensing that he was asking about her motives she stated, "We are only trying to make the Christians more aware. You are completely on the wrong track. We are only trying to pray." When asked why she took sannyas, she replied, "Sannyas is just where the spirit leads," and quickly excused herself.

A Catholic nun's receiving sannyas from a Hindu swami seemed questionable, so Hinduism Today contacted Sadhaka Kartikeyan of the Divine Life Society at Rishikesh who was visiting San Francisco. He stated, "Our swamis would never initiate a Christian into Sannyas. Perhaps they were just given a mantram." Other Hindu leaders, including the head of Kasi Mutt in Tirupanandal, confirmed that it would not be possible for a non-Hindu to take sannyas. After all, sannyas is Hindu monkhood.

The general attitude of the Order of the Sacred Heart toward Ishapriya is one of deep reverence and respect. But outside the order, a Sister explained the mother Church remains uneasy with her yoga teachings and Eastern look and learnings.

Hindu Reaction

The general Hindu reaction to these ashrams is one of tolerant, even loving acceptance and respect. Sarvadharm samabava, equal respect for all religions, has long been a fundamental principle of Hindu culture. Allowing another person to hold beliefs different from one's own without attempting to change them, is dear to the Hindu's heart, and he does, in actual practice, accept an enormous range of beliefs within his own religion.

Yet, among those at the vanguard of Hindu renaissance there is suspicion, resistance and even outright hostility as shown by comments collected for Hinduism Today in India on the subject of Christian ashrams. Here is a sampling: G.M. Jagtiani of Bombay wrote: "A mischievous attempt is being made by some Christian missionaries to wear the saffron robe, put tilak on their forehead, recite the Gita, and convert the Hindus to Christianity." S. Shanmukham of the Hindu Munnani, Kanyakumari, states: "Once I met an orange-robed sannyasin. I took her to be a Hindu sannyasin. When asked, she said 'I have put on this dress so that I

can come in contact with Hindus very easily and tell them about Christianity.'" R. Chidambasaksamma, Kanyakumari said. "It seems to be a sinister plan to make people accept Christ as God, the only God. They adopt all the philosophies and practices of Hindus but would accept only Jesus as God. It is only a development of their original plan of Indianisation of Christianity."

At the root of these criticisms is a deep distrust of the Christians in India. Imposed by force from the outside, Christianity is still considered an unwelcome intrusion from the West. Even Mahatma Gandhi stated that from the time Christianity was established in Rome in the third century, "it became an imperialist faith as it remains to this day." This unfortunate legacy has never been forgotten by the Hindus. Though the military backing is no longer present, enormous sums of money are sent into India for the use of missionaries. A well-monied and successful missionary is regarded as a threat to the national stability.

The official government document, Madhya Pradesh Report on Christian Missionary Activities (1956) stated, "evangelization in India appears to be a part of the uniform world policy to revive Christendom for re-establishing Western supremacy and is not prompted by spiritual motives. The objective is apparently to create Christian minority pockets with a view to disrupt the solidarity of the non-Christian societies. The ulterior motive is fraught with danger to the security of the State."

Christians are only three percent of India's population, yet they control 25% of all schools and 40% of all social service organizations. Their Western affiliations give them political entree and cultural clout beyond their numbers. Christians are widely viewed as not necessarily strongly loyal to the nation, the Catholics in particular being thought to be under the direct rule of the Vatican. The Madhya Pradesh report also says, "Because conversion muddles the convert's sense of unity and solidarity with his society, there is a danger of his loyalty to his country and state being undermined."

New Delhi's Sita Ram Goel wrote a book on the Catholic threat in India full of intellectual fire. *Papacy, its Doctrine and History* was published in response to the Pope's 1986 visit to India. This small volume is a scathing account of the history of Christians in India. Some excerpts: "Hindus at large were showing great aversion to Christianity accompanied as it was by wanton violence, loud-mouthed outpourings of the friars against everything which the Hindus cherished, killing of Brahmins and cows wherever the newcomers had no fear of reprisals, the extremely unhygienic

habits of the Portuguese including their 'holy men,' and the drunken revelries in which they all indulged very frequently. The only people who associated with the paranghis were prostitutes, pimps and similar characters living on the fringes of Hindu Society." Goel explains the indifference which Hindus showed to the Christian missionaries: "To an average Hindu, saintliness signified a calm self-possession and contemplative silence. The paroxysms of these strangers could only amuse him, whenever they did not leave him dead cold." Finally Goel mentions the problem which continues to face the Christians: "Christianity had failed to register as a religion with the masses as well as the classes of Hindu society. They continued to look at this imported creed as an imposition with the help of British bayonets."

It is against this background that any activities of the Christians are viewed. The early missionaries were not at all above acquiring converts by force, money or deception. And it's reported that unscrupulous tactics still abound. The present Catholic ashrams have inherited a history of intrigue and subterfuge. Here is a description from the Madhya Pradesh Report: "Robert De Nobili (a Catholic Jesuit priest) appeared in Madura in 1607 clad in the saffron robes of a Sadhu with sandal paste on his forehead and the sacred thread on his body. He gave out that he was a Brahmin from Rome. He showed documentary evidence to prove that he belonged to a clan that had migrated from ancient India. He declared that he was bringing a message which had been taught in India by Indian ascetics of yore and that he was only restoring to Hindus one of their lost sacred books, namely the 5th Veda, called Yeshurveda [Jesus Veda]. It passed for a genuine work until the Protestant Missionaries exposed the fraud about the year 1840. This Brahmin Sannyasi of the 'Roman Gotram,' Father De Nobili, worked for 40 years and died at the ripe age of 89 in 1656. It is said that he had converted about a lakh of persons but they all melted away after his death."

Critics also point to more recent examples of hidden motives in establishing ashrams and adopting the appearance of sannyasins. Noted Indian writer Ram Swarup in his pamphlet "Liberal" Christianity quotes the intentions of one of the founders of Shantivanam, Father J. Monchanin: "Fr. J. Monchanin himself defines his mission in these terms: 'I have come to India for no other purpose than to awaken in a few souls the desire (the passion) to raise up a Christian India. It will take centuries, sacrificed lives and we shall perhaps die before seeing any realizations. A Christian India, completely Indian and completely Christian will be something so wonderful, the sacrifice of our lives is not too much to ask.'"

It is precisely this goal, which can only be described as the spiritual genocide of

Hindu dharma, which motivates leaders like Swarup and movements like VHP and RSS to protect India's religious traditions against overt conversion efforts.

The Catholic Response

Catholic leaders Hinduism Today spoke with consider all of these complaints to be problems of the past. Father John Keane, Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs officer of the Archdiocese of San Francisco said, "The main thrust of Pope John Paul II is 'irrevocable commitment' to the unity of the Churches [the various Christian sects] and to fostering dialogue and cooperation amongst the religions of the world. The Church began to realize that within non-Christian religions there is truth, there is goodness and there is beauty and it is about time we began to recognize it. Whatever policies were directed toward non-Christian religions before, the Church has said [through the Second Vatican Council], are not according to what the Church through Jesus Christ has been trying to say." In other words, the Church has seen the errors of its ways.

When asked about militant or devious conversion tactics, he said, "Well, you know they're called 'Rice Christians.' The Church is getting nowhere though that. That type of missionary zeal is no longer really appreciated. We don't make friends with anyone by doing those kind of things. What [I have explained] is the official attitude of the Roman Catholic Church towards the Hindu tradition. If anyone in India feels that the Hindu tradition is pagan and has to be rubbed out, ignored or fought against violently, they haven't understood what the Vatican Council is trying to say."

Vatican II

The widespread support for these Catholic ashrams by the official Church is one part of the vast fall-out from the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) held from 1962 to 1965. Vatican II was an attempt to confront the challenge of Catholicism in the 20th century, yet it apparently precipitated, through its decision, an even greater crisis than it intended to solve. Many new interpretations of doctrine were set forth - one on non-Christians was a major one. As a result of numerous fundamental changes, the Catholic Church faces a crisis within itself. In America alone the Catholic Church is losing members at the rate of one thousand per day. In 1984 in

the United States 1,100 new priests were ordained compared with 14,000 in 1964. The conclusions from these figures is drawn by such persons as Bishop Jon Diegel of the American Catholic Church of the Malabar Rite: for its very survival, the Catholic Church must make an impact in Asia and Africa before it dwindles in the West.

One result of Vatican II was a new attitude toward Hinduism and other religions, released by Pope Paul VI in 1964: "[The Church] regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men. The Church, therefore, exhorts her sons, that through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, carried out with prudence and love and in witness to the Christian faith and life, they recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these men."

In regard to Hinduism, he stated: "In Hinduism men explore the divine mystery and express it both in the limitless riches of myth and the accurately defined insights of philosophy. They seek release from the trials of the present life by ascetical practices, profound meditation and recourse to God in confidence and love."

Vatican II's new Code of Canon Law offers this definition of dialogue: "By the witness of their lives and their message, let the missionaries enter into a sincere dialogue with those who do not yet believe in Christ. Accommodating their approach to the mentality and culture of their audience, they will open up the way for them to reach the point where they are ready to accept the Good News [the Gospel of Christ]."

Inculturation has become a very central aspect of the relation of the Church to Asia and Africa and is the basis for the present existence of Catholic ashrams. A thorough exposition of the idea was made by the Third General Conference of Latin American Bishops in January of 1978. Here are statements from their report:

"The Church must make the attempt to translate the Gospel message into the anthropological language and symbols of the culture into which it is inserted. This

is what is meant by inculturation of the Gospel. Yet the Church ought also to regard culture with a critical eye, denouncing sin and amending, purifying and exorcizing its countervalues and overthrowing its idolatrous values. The Church leads people on to abandon false ideas of God, unnatural behavior and the illegitimate manipulation of person by person. The Church inspires local cultures to accept through faith the lordship of Christ, without whose grace and truth, they would be unable to reach their full stature." Translation: "Let them keep those cultural forms we approve, but make them Catholics."

In a lengthy interview with Hinduism Today, Father Frank Podgorski, Director of Asian Area Studies at Seton Hall University, New Jersey spoke on the subject of the new approach of the Catholic Church. He is a noted scholar in Asian studies and the author of the popular book, *Hinduism: A Beautiful Mosaic*. He said, "I don't deny that there have been difficulties in the past, and that there are difficulties in the reality of the present. But as part of the official Church thrust today, there is a call for reverence, respect, a call for making the Hindu a better Hindu, allowing the Hindu to be a better Hindu. In Africa, in recent days, after the India trip, Pope John-Paul II called for a truly African Church to emerge. An African Church in which the African spirit would enter in and enrich the Church and make it more catholic and by that he talks about basic customs entering into the tradition of the Church. Now we're not talking about changing the Church theologically, we're talking really about adapting the natural habits in such a way so that the teaching of Christ, so that Christ may more fully communicate with the spirit of Africa and that means adapting natural prayer forms and things of that nature. So just as yoga may be adapted, so may various other ways." Father Podgorski's statement that "we're not talking about changing the Church theologically" is crucial and fraught with ramifications for the Hindu. As long as the Catholic church continues to claim a divine monopoly on salvation, its tolerance for other faiths will be incomplete and its adaptation to other religions only superficial adjustments for the purpose of expansion.

Vatican II made the Church's ultimate stance crystal clear: "[The Council] relies on sacred Scripture and Tradition in teaching that this pilgrim Church is necessary for salvation. Christ alone is the mediator of salvation and the way of salvation. He presents himself to us in his Body, which is the Church. When he insisted expressly on the necessity for faith and baptism, he asserted at the same time the necessity for the Church which men would enter by the gateway of baptism. This means that it would be impossible for men to be saved if they refused to enter or to remain in the Catholic Church, unless they were unaware that her foundation by God through Jesus Christ made it a necessity."

It is difficult for the Hindu to reconcile this statement with the declaration on Non-Christian religions made by the same council. Clearly while striving for true tolerance, the Church is still anchored by its fundamental "one path, one church" dogma. On the one hand the Church admits that there is truth and beauty in other religions. On the other it declares the Catholic Church essential for salvation.

Practical Applications of Dialogue and Inculturation

Hindus who have heard these semantic posturing and seen Hindu children slowly drawn away from their faith criticize this approach as clever maneuvering. Ram Swarup in his "Liberal" Christianity pamphlet notes: "Their procedure is not to denounce Hinduism forthright; it is to take different categories of Hindu thinking and 'after exhausting all the positive points that Hinduism provides as solutions, proceed to show that Christianity gives fuller and ultimate solution to those and all other problem.'" He has quoted here from the book entitled Indian Inferiority and Christian Theology which is a summary of a meeting by Christian theologians of India at Almora. Swarup recounts their evaluation of Bhakti: 'Hindu Bhakti too has more demerits than merits. Its chief defects are that (1) 'the notion of love itself is not perfect;' (2) 'there is no integration between knowledge and love,' - one has to choose between them; and (3) it lacks a 'perfect concept of alterity [that God and His creation are separate] and there is no proper concept of sin.' Nevertheless, the Bhakti of a Hindu could still be a 'preparation for the final confrontation with the personal God who manifests Himself in the Christian Revelation.' "Swarup, who considers his religion the most enlightened known to man, is offended by the Almora conclusions.

A comparison might best illustrate Hindu concerns. Let us imagine that one day a Muslim missionary arrives in a poor section of America such as a part of the Catholic Hispanic (Mexican origin) section of San Francisco. Well supplied with zeal and petro-dollars from his own country, he learns Spanish, builds a Muslim cathedral along the lines of a Catholic building, outfitting it with pews, organs, choirs and so forth. Preaching from a Christian Bible appropriately edited according to the Koran, he puts on the clerical collar and black robes of a Catholic Priest and holds Sunday services which look just like Mass, except that prayers are to Allah and Mohammed instead of Jesus. In ministering to the local people, he tells them that his Islamic faith is just a slight variation of Christianity, one which puts the crowning touches on it. Their father's religion, Catholicism was, he says, flawed but it is a good preparation for Islam. He gives loans to those in need, which need not be repaid if one joins his Church. He opens an orphanage and raises the children as Muslims though their parents are Christians. When accused of deceiving the

people, he says he is only adapting his religion to the local context and expressing his Muslim charity and divine call to evangelize.

In this situation, would not the local Catholic leaders be offended? Would they not point out that this preacher was making an unfair and undue impact because of his foreign funding? They would ask why he did not simply come forward as he was, a Muslim, and not pretend that his religion was only an "improved" version of Christianity. They would challenge his right to wear the vestments their community honored, to sing the hymns their community honored, to sing the hymns their mystics composed, usurp symbols held to be holy, to draw their people away from Christ, thereby dividing the families and pitting wife against husband, father against son, and neighbor against neighbor.

This is the situation the Hindu finds himself in, though it has developed over several hundred years. Christian missionaries have adopted Hindu ways of life, Hindu religious symbols, architecture, worship forms and declared themselves as Swamis. A Catholic priest who calls himself "swami" instantly attains the status and authority of a holy man in Hindu society, which he can use to make converts. By using Sanskrit terminology in his sermons he implies a close relationship of Hindu theology to Catholic theology, a relationship which does not really exist. Such missionaries speak authoritatively on Hindu scriptures and argue that their teachings are consonant with everything Hindu, but add a finishing touch, a "fulness," to the traditional faith.

Hindus are seriously questioning whether yoga, puja, and sannyas, which are so deeply rooted in particular Hindu theological concepts, can ethically be adopted by Christianity. Christians don't believe in the practice of Yoga as the means to God-Realization - as taught by Hindus. Puja is based upon an understanding of Gods and Devas which Catholics do not share. And finally sannyas is Hindu monasticism, rooted in Hindu beliefs, leading not to heaven and Jesus but to moksha - the Hindu's realization of Absolute Truth.

The Future

As the 21st century nears, Catholics are more interested than ever in India and in Hinduism, as indicated the Pope's January visit to the sub-continent and by a

growing number of faculty and departments in US Catholic universities dedicated to Asian Studies. As they have drawn closer to Hinduism, their history and motives in India and elsewhere have come under scrutiny.

Hindu spiritual leaders and intellectuals are open to the dialogue Catholics seek, but not if cooperation and brotherliness opens Hindu families to unethical conversion strategies. Obviously, the Catholic Church will legitimately adopt certain outer forms from Indian culture to serve existing members, but these have ethical limits. Among those actions of the Church which Hindus consider exceed these limits are the priests' and nuns' adoption of Hindu vestments and religious titles like "swami" and participation in non-Catholic sacraments such as sannyas. The misleading use of Hindu scripture and yoga teachings must also be examined, as should Catholic use of social and educational services which should not subtly erode Hindu faith or take advantage of Indian poverty to convert. Ethical guidelines must be crafted that allow Catholics to attend wholly to their members spiritual needs, but do not impinge unscrupulously on Hindus.

Hindus continue to be wary of Christian expansionism and criticism of Hindu culture and theology. An energetic Hindu renaissance has turned wariness into open challenge to Christian conversions, with results yet to be seen. Still, Hindus respect all the great faiths, honor their spirituality. The difference today is that they demand that the Sanatana Dharma be equally respected and honored in the Vedic spirit of "Truth is one, paths are many."