INTRODUCTION

The present study entitled “A Historical Study of Influence of Christianity on Indian and Australian Societies” compares influence of Christianity on Australian Aboriginal traditional Dreamtime belief and Hinduism (Sanatan Dharm), Indian religion. Christianity arose out of Judaism with the belief that Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled the prophetic predictions of the Hebrew Bible as the Christ. It is a Greek term which translates the Hebrew Mash’ah (the appointed; figuratively, savior, Messiah).

Religion is belief in God’s existence, relationship involves knowing God. Different religious and cultural groups express their dominant views on the basis of their respective worldviews. In Australia prior to European invasion of 227 years ago, Indigenous Australians were the original inhabitants of the Australian continent and nearby islands. In order to assimilate the natives into European culture children born of aboriginal parents were taken away from parents and were placed in the Mission Compound. Because of this deliberate conversion over 75% aboriginal accepted Christianity. Recently their descendants converted to Christianity are now seeking their ancestry (genealogy). Due to proselytization to Christianity, majority of Aborigines in Australia have lost faith in European culture as well as in Church.

Though the Christian faith came to India in 52 AD, Christian population remained almost stagnant at 2.3 %? Whereas it arrived in Australia only 227 years ago and over 70% Aborigines accepted Christianity. Religion affects our society in many ways because it affects our way of thinking. It affects the way people look at issues in the nation and the way people vote. Religious differences help shape social diversity. Religion has immense influence ancient as well as modern Indian society. Religion in India has always played a big role in every aspect of life, from common-place daily chores to education and politics. Secular India is home to Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and other countless religious traditions. Hinduism is the leading faith, practiced by nearly 80 per cent of the population. Besides Hindu, Muslims and Christians are an integral part of Indian society.

The researcher was brought up in a Rajputi Arya Samaj family, studied in a missionary school “Sacred Heart High School” in Mhow Madhya Pradesh, India-1945 onward. Subsequently studied and worked in America, Australia and the Philippines, and interacted with people of various faiths and religions: Jews, Christians, Muslims, Mormons, Jehovah’s Witness (JWS), Free Masons, Buddhists, Unitarian, atheists and numerous other cults & movements. Being a skeptic “doubting Thomas” the author always asked this question - where and why do we differ and have different religions, faiths and do we converge?

With this background the researcher undertakes the present study entitled “A Historical Study of Influence of Christianity on Indian and Australian Societies” comparing influence of Christianity on two countries; Australian Aboriginal traditional Dreamtime belief and Hinduism (Sanatan Dharm), religion of Hindus in India. While working in SHIATS from 2006 to date, the researcher was inspired to undertake the present study. The author often pondered and queried “Why is Yeshu-Darbar-Royal Court of Christ, led by Founder Vice Chancellor Most Rev. R. B. Lal has been so popular attracting people from various castes, denominations and classes including Jews, Muslims, and Hindus— even from reputed higher caste families and Buddhists.
Christianity came to India in 53 AD. But why the Christian population did not exceed and remained stagnant at 2.3% in India? Whereas Christianity arrived in Australia 227 years ago with the arrival of the First Fleet “Endeavour” in 1788 from Britain. 70% Aborigines were converted to Christianity by missionaries. Currently Australia’s population is 23 million, of whom 70% are Christians. With so many ideologies, cultures, languages, cults and faiths world-wide why there is so much diversity between and within diverse religions and religious practices in both continents: India and Australia? Where and how various religions converge? Will it be possible to settle for one true and universal religion/faith/way of life to avoid conflicts and arguments in the name of religions?

Limitation of the Study

The Questionnaire survey (purposive) was conducted in three states of India and three states in Australia due to limited resources, and familiarity of the researcher of these states to assess respondent’s perception of influence of Christianity in Australia and India.

Objectives of the study

- To assess history and influence of Christianity on modern Indian and Australian Societies

- To assess perceptions of Christianity by believers of other faiths on the basis of the data collated in Australia and India with critical statistical evaluation of survey-questionnaire by applying scientific analysis and statistical evaluation of data