3. REPRESENTATION OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY & TRADITION IN MISSIONARY LITERATURE

The arrival of Christian missionaries\textsuperscript{66} to far flung areas from Europe with increasing colonization of non-European world brought them in interface with new societies and cultures constituting civilizations hitherto unknown to them. The work of proselytisation required an understanding of the socio-cultural context in which they were supposed to operate. It required missionaries to primarily engage themselves intellectually in the local environment. The intellectual engagement needed to be contextualized and any attempt to comprehend them in isolation would have undermined the historical processes that shaped the missionary consciousness. The missionaries, collectively as well as individually, were groomed in a particular socio-cultural set up and had a stint of institutionalized probation for the vocation. Missionaries represented a religion, an organized institution, had faith in a religious ideology and also represented a social mooring that was mainly European as per the scope of our study. This chapter primarily seeks to explore the intellectual endeavours of the missionaries in comprehending and then representing Indian philosophy and tradition that resulted mainly in the theological engagements.

That the Church attempted to engage non-Christian societies intellectually may be understood from the fact that “in Christian west, (even) Orientalism\textsuperscript{67} was considered to have commenced its formal existence with the decision of the church council of Vienne in

\textsuperscript{66} Missionaries here refer to the Jesuit Fathers belonging to Catholic Denomination.

\textsuperscript{67} A systematic understanding of the orient as conceptualized by the west.
1312 to establish a series of chairs in 'Arabic, Greek, Hebrew, and Syriac in Paris, Oxford, Bologna, Avignon and Salamanca'. These chairs along with the institutionalization of Christian intellectual endeavours probably equipped the church to pose intellectual challenges to the non-Christian societies. Perhaps, the internal organization of Church itself gives its entire theological discipline an intellectual orientation with its academia confident of its scholasticism challenging non-Christian theologies. It is to argue that theological-intellectual engagement is inherent in Church’s structure and organization but at the same time the missionary ‘intellectualism’ was Church centric and even exclusive refusing to accept that Church had anything to learn from other faiths. The Church right from its inception structured its own academic institutions and discipline so as to present its gospel and scholasticism in scholarly discourses.

The theological engagements of the missionaries in the non-European societies have to be contextualized in the experience of Church in the west. The Church as one of the most organized entities had to face intellectual challenges since its inception. For the purpose of the present study, it would be pertinent to understand the changes in the west seeking to weaken the monopolistic authority of the Church in the realm of culture and religion. The Post enlightenment era in Europe saw the entire society re-structured making the Church to withdraw from socio-political spheres of life. In the face of the movements for secularization and reformation increasingly gaining strength, the Church too attempted to reconstitute and reorder its own system of knowledge in the newer context. In its attempt to meet the challenges posed by post enlightenment rationality and science, the

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68 Said, Edward; Orientalism; Chapter-I, The Scope of Orientalism; Pp. 49-50; Penguin Books; Pub. 1978
Church tried to adapt itself with these discourses and thus attempted to mould itself within the parameters of modernity. While coming into interface with the non-European societies, it was able to forward its claim as a modern discourse overlapping itself with the secular western discourses of modernity. It was able to do so for the experience it had gained in facing secularization and reformation movements in the west. Such experience allowed the missionaries to attempt for appropriating the 'civilizing-missions' claim vis-à-vis modernity along with the colonialists in the non-European societies.

In the context of non-European societies where the missionaries entered the scene along with the colonial powers, the intellectual endeavours were in consonance with the 'civilizing' agenda of the colonialists seeking to 'orientalize' the orient. As in the west, the missionaries attempted to locate their theological discourses in the framework of the academic discourses provided by the European scholars studying the various aspects of the colonized societies. Many a time the missionaries themselves emerged as scholars of repute even contributing immensely to modern academic knowledge. The writings of missionaries like William Carey, Alexander Duff, Caldwell and others were acclaimed as scholarly. It may be said that there were linkages within the missionary understanding and the western intellectual system, primarily because the missionaries had an understanding of the western intellectual discourses by virtue of being a part of the same. The knowledge, thus generated was mainly a result of the collective intellectual endeavours of the western scholars including the missionaries. This knowledge attempted to determine and define the non-European

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**69 Missionaries’ intellectual works mostly tried to argue on the basis of the academic knowledge generated by the scholars representing modern academia.**
colonial society within the discourses prevalent in the western academia.

The establishment of the British rule in the late 18th century was followed by its consolidation, which was to be furthered by the introduction of colonial institutions seeking to perpetuate modern-imperial ideology. It was believed that ‘by the eighteenth century, India had lapsed into a sort of amnesia about its ancient past, and in the process become apathetic to its historical remains.’ The foundation of Asiatic Society of Bengal was necessitated to arrive at an understanding of Indian socio-cultural set up mainly through the reconstruction of its past. Initially, the work of the scholars like William Jones, Charles Wilkins, HT Colebrooke, HH Wilson, WH Mill, George Turnour, James Prinsep and others was responsible in the conceptualization of Indian history and its socio-cultural pattern. The understanding about the Indian socio-cultural pattern was evolved in the course of time upon which Orientalist-Evangelical-Utilitarian debate had a markedly powerful imprint.

One may hardly help to disagree that missionary ideology has to be also contextualized in the debate on Orientalism, Anglicism and Secularism. It may be also said that the missionaries were far ahead in establishing schools and other educational institutions in different parts of the country even prior to the colonization of India. The missionaries had started their intellectual endeavours much earlier in arriving at an understanding so as to further their proselytisation activities. The establishment of British rule had provided the missionaries with an opportunity to shape the intellectual consciousness of the country, which they were keen to utilize by

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70 Kejriwal, OP; The Asiatic Society of Bengal and the Discovery of India’s Past 1784-1838; Conclusions; p. 220; OUP; 1988
having a say in the conceptualization of the education system. Ballantyne says, “Shall our absolutely ultimate end, then’ be the production of a first rate engineer, or a valuable revenue officer, or an accomplished native magistrate? With this I am not prepared to be satisfied. My proposed end is the making of each educated Hindu a Christian, - on principle and conviction...That a Hindu should on principle and conviction, embrace a religion which, like Christianity, bases its claims on historical evidence, presupposes not merely an acquaintance with historical assertions, but a cultivation of the critical faculty, so as that the force of the historical evidence may be intelligently felt.”

The Missionaries were not late in realizing that it was necessary for them to acquire an understanding of Indian philosophy, traditions and customs. The Indian Society and its cultural pattern had apparently deep philosophical foundations nurtured through age-old traditions and customs. Indian philosophy, which was variously represented, appeared to the missionaries subtle, abstruse, complicated and even contradictory. That the Indian philosophy represented the collective wisdom of the ancient past was not doubted and even sometime argued to be similar to that of the Jews and the antiquity of west, the philosophical urge of the subtle Indian intellect was to be addressed through rigorous missionary endeavors, “since in this world God wills to work through means, the missionaries are called upon to be humble instruments”. An understanding of the Indian philosophical system and tradition was not only to be acquired from non-missionary works of the western

71 Ballyntine, James R; The Bible for the Pundit; Introduction; Publisher: James Madden, London & E. J. Lazarus & Co, Benaras; 1860; p.xiii-xiv
72 Morris, John Brand; An Essay Towards the Conversion of Learned and Philosophical Hindus; Dialogue The Second; Printed for JGF & J Rivington; St. Paul's Church Yard, London; Pp.143-255; Pub.1843
73 Ibid; p.xii
scholars but was to be supplemented with the contemporary indigenous readings upon which the missionaries were supposed to work contrasting, comparing, refuting, appreciating and even re-interpreting the existing knowledge. The missionaries mainly attempted to question the revealed status of the Philosophy thereby challenging their divinity and questioning its legitimacy.\(^7^4\) The legitimacy of the Indian philosophy and religious tradition were repeatedly questioned on the ground of their historicity. Even while seriously questioning the legitimacy, as late as in the first half of the 20\(^{th}\) century, the missionaries were candid in admitting that the Indians had, “a Civilization to oppose our civilization, some kind of religion to oppose our religion”\(^7^5\) Perhaps, for the missionaries, an engagement was only possible with an understanding of the deep, complex and subtle philosophies, the Indian possessed\(^7^6\) for they were haunted by the concerns like, “can we then dream of sallying forth to meet them with no better forged weapons in our hands than a shallow knowledge of theology and smattering of scholasticism? No, before we engage in the combat we must know on what ground our enemies stand.”\(^7^7\)

The above stated concerns were probably responsible for their efforts to enrich their own knowledge about Indian socio-cultural system and the philosophical mechanisms governing the traditions and customs. It was required to fashion their own strategies and theological positions through a process of disputation, adjustments and adaptations\(^7^8\). Such an exercise appeared unavoidable for the missionaries as they concluded that, “By so

\(^{74}\) Goreh, Nehemiah; A Rational Refutation of the Hindu Philosophical; Section-I, Chapter-I; Pp. 01-02; SPCK, Calcutta; 1860

\(^{75}\) Dandoy, G., S.J.; The Purpose of our Academy, Catholic Orphan Press, Calcutta, 1918; p.10

\(^{76}\) Ibid.

\(^{77}\) Ibid; p. 11.

\(^{78}\) Ibid; P. 03.
doing we shall reap a twofold advantage: first – we shall understand the people, and next the work of conversion will be made more easy".\textsuperscript{79} The inter-missionary and intra-missionary debates too on the course of missionaries’ activities were to be determined on the basis of such understandings and conceptualisations. Practices such as snake worship, funeral rites, samskara to philosophical traditions of Upanishads, Bhagwad Gita, Vedanta Nyaya, Mimamsa etc. were discussed in details seeking to problematise them and also to delineate links with Christian theology.

\textbf{DOCTRINE OF KARMA AND RELEASE}

The missionaries found that Hinduism was centered around the concept of Nirvana or liberation. Fr. Wallace says that the whole religious life and worship of the Hindu race was flowing from two sources viz. hope of nirvana and despair of Nirvana.\textsuperscript{80} To the missionaries it appeared very pessimistic that the Hindu shastras say that only one out of millions might be able to attain Nirvana; it was far less compared to the prospect offered by Christianity!\textsuperscript{81}

Although Hindu traditions presented a complex conglomeration of diverse systems having astounding power of syncretism\textsuperscript{82} and which may be identified with different schools of philosophy along with innumerable traditions and customs, and yet for the missionaries, “it had besides the basics of an elementary philosophy common to all sects, and for which the primest foundations were the axioms of Karma and Release."\textsuperscript{83} The doctrine of Karma and Release was according to them firmly grounded on the

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid; P. 06.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid; P.04.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid; p.83.
principle of Dharma. Karma is related to this religion and explains the miseries of one's life and consoles in all its troubles while Release is the goal. Dharma is related to social, familial and moral life, but its conception even include the social system with its castes and rest, which is unchanging and eternal.\textsuperscript{84} The theory of Karma and Release or Karma-Samsara was considered to be pre-Vedic and existing from time immemorial. It was also not considered unique to India as such doctrines were said to exist everywhere in the world and possessed by every races. The systematization of the doctrine was attributed to the Hindus, which was systematically found in the earliest Upanishad namely Chandogya and Brihadaranyaka.\textsuperscript{85} Father Panikulangara writes, "Karma –Samsara is generally taken for granted by the Hindus because it is clearly stated and proved in their Scriptures and tradition. All their ablest upholders and defenders maintain the theory in its entirety. To them it is the only adequate solution of the problem of Evil and of inequalities in this world; the only doctrine that vindicates the infinite justice of God.\textsuperscript{86}

The missionaries were aware of the fact that the Indian philosophical discourses were based on premise distinct from the Christian theological conceptualisation. The notion of religion and the goals enshrined with it were based on suppositions very different from their own. The concept of Indifference and renunciation too were the product of the same Indian environment, which was intellectually nurtured by Indian philosophical tradition. The central point of difference was evident in the different understandings of the dictum like "the image of God in the soul" – "For we (Christians) mean by it something coming to us from without and superadded to

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid; p.83.
\textsuperscript{85} Panikulangara, Thomas, SJ; Karma- Samsara : According to the hindu Darshanas; P.55;Typed; Academy Records; 1935
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid; P.66
ourselves; God's image stamped on us as the image of the sovereign
is stamped on the coin of the realm. To the Hindu, however this
imago Dei is the soul in the real entity, radiant in loveliness, dazzling
in glory, resplendent in all knowledge and power and changeless
from eternity to eternity. It is that Imago Dei in the soul which is at
once seer, hearer, feeder, taster, smeller, knower, enjoyer and lord of
all that is in the concrete nature, and so it is actually our own
person.” 87 But, to gain that supernatural state, abandonment of all
things i.e., renunciation is required. To realise that supreme with
which the person is in union, the renunciation of all that a man has in
the world, even his own private and individualised life also. The
next point was how is this attachment to the world and desire for
sense enjoyment to be broken? The answer given was by
Indifference. 88

The missionaries saw a danger in overrating the Hindu
philosophy if studied sympathetically and profoundly. The main
charge of missionaries against the concepts of Nirvana, Karma &
Release, practice of renunciation and indifference was that it catered
to a miniscule section of the society as its intricacy and inherent logic
offered salvation to only a few. They state, “they fail to see the
insufficiency of the motives it supplies to induce the ordinary men to
understand the long and terrible path to spiritual freedom which it
holds up to them.... its uncertainty, its immense length through vistas
of finite existence where lives are but milestones on the way, and the
possibility of becoming lost in the labyrinth never reaching the goal
at all.” 89

87 Wallace, W, SJ; Indifference and Renunciation As Taught in the Hindu Shashtras; Academy
Records; 1913; Manuscript; p.03.
88 Ibid; p.10.
89 Ibid; p.09.
The missionaries' strategy to tackle the challenges posed by the Indian philosophy seems to centre around their approach to consummate it in Christianity. They were probably aware of the difficulty entailed in the task for they admit, “But when we have raised the standard of consummation, and showed ourselves able to fulfill, then the sons of India will make the heavy sacrifice required to come to us, aye though it break their heart to do it, for Hindoo thirst for liberation which all their sages taught is still the strongest force in their nature, and will PREVAIL”.90 The missionaries only simply proposed to clear the prevalent philosophy of its distortions and exaggerations in their bid to fulfill the teachings by absorbing and superseding it. But how? They were silent about it.

VEDA AND ITS PHILOSOPHY

The word ‘Veda’ literally meant knowledge par excellence and signified the supreme authority in the Indian religious tradition with the Hindus considering it divine and revealed. It is mainly divided into two sections, viz; ‘Mantras’ and ‘Brahmanas’. In mantras Gods are either eulogized or invoked for bestowing long life, health and heaven while Brahmanas are mainly composed in prose, sometimes involving discussion related to mantra. There are four Vedas:

1. The *Rig Veda* consisting 1028 hymns and divided into ten ‘mandalas’ or eight ‘astakas’. It is considered to be the foundation of all vedic literature. It has some hymns, philosophical in nature speculating on theories of life after death, destiny of the soul, universe and its creation.

90 Ibid; p.21.
2. The *Sama Veda* consists of stanzas (excepting 75) taken from the Rig Veda. It is also sometime called book of chants.

3. The *Yajur Veda* is the collection of various mantras for the purpose of recitation and rules to be observed at the time of sacrifice.

4. The *Atharva Veda* is in the main a book of spells and incantation appealing to the demonic world and even witchcraft.

The Vedas and related scriptures are divided into 'Sruti' and 'Smriti'. Sruti meaning one that is 'listened to' generally refers to the four Vedas and considered to be more authoritative. The later portions of Brahmanas are called 'Aranyakas' (one related to forests) and the final part of Aranyakas is philosophical books named 'Upanishads' which belongs to latest stage of Brahmanas. There are twelve Upanishads and are deeply philosophical in content. 'Vedanga' or the limbs of the Vedas, regarded as less authoritative are styled as Smriti i.e. memory by tradition. They are six in numbers viz; phonetics, ritual, grammar, etymology, metrics and astronomy. Apart from these, there are 'Sutras' meaning thread, clue, guide, rule aphorism etc. These are discussions on various aspects of Vedas leading to better understanding of the scriptures.91

Vedas represented the fountainhead of different schools of philosophy identified with Hinduism. The Hindus who considered them sacred, infallible, eternal and revealed have held Vedas and related large compendium of literature in high esteem. The missionaries questioned the revealed status or inspired origin of the Vedas.92 Missionaries continued to repeatedly argue that the Vedas were not revealed and therefore not divine or infallible as such

92 Morris, Rev. John Brande; An Essay Towards the conversion of Learned and philosophical Hindus; Dialogue-I & III; printed for JGF & J. Rivington; London; Pp.03-139 & 259-401; 1843
notions are being ascribed to them. As late as in the 20th century Father Miranda felt that had the Indians been aware of Christian theology, "they would have been easily persuaded; conscious as they were of their guilt and ignorance; that they have not received a full and final revelation that whatever they have thought out need not be divinely certain and infallible."93 They attempted to show that the Upanishads were "philosophic rhapsodies rather than consecutive treatises; they are the intuitions and inspirations, the lightening flashes of religious and philosophic thoughts of mystic seers rather than the elaborately worked out systems of professional philosophers."94

SIX SCHOOLS OF PHILOSOPHY: THE ISSUE OF DIVINITY AND INFAILIBILITY

While Vedas, Smriti and Puranas were known to be the fundamental sources of authority, the philosophy was seen to be divided into six schools of "Darsanas" viz. Nyaya, Vaisesika, Sankhya, Yoga, Mimansa and Vedanta. The Indian philosophical system were also very often read along with the Greek philosophy and that of Jews' and India was also considered the land from where the knowledge originated and spread through Persia to West.95 It was probably in locating the Indian philosophical system within the framework of that of the Greek antiquity and other ancient races known to the Missionaries and with which the Christianity had to contend with in its formative phases that the conceptualization of a

93 Miranda, J, SJ; The Inspiration of Veda; Manuscript; Academy Records; 1912.  
94 Saldanhasy, A; The Vedic Foundation; Manuscript; Academy Records; 1917; p.198.  
95 Morris, Rev. John Brande; An Essay Towards the Conversion of Learned and Philosophical Hindus; An Essay on the Conversion- Dialogue the First, Laura's Dialogue; J.G.F. & J.Rivington, London; 1843; P.04
critique was sought on the basis of the accumulated experience. The missionaries sought to contrast Indian philosophical system with the Christian theological understanding and primarily focused on winning over the learned Hindus in their religious disputations. For the missionaries, the Veda represented illusory and speculative ideas, which were far from reality. The monism as preached by Vedantists also appeared to them absurd to the extent of blasphemy as they upheld distinctness of the God from all other spirits to be supreme. The concepts of the Day of Judgment and creation in Christianity made them vocal in opposition to the concepts held by Nyaya and Sankhya claiming eternity of soul. The Indian system of philosophy for the missionaries appeared to be disclaiming the authority in term of morality as propounded by the theological doctrines of Christianity.  

While disputing the divine origin of the Vedas, it was conceded that they were the works of most intelligent and learned men and acute investigators who were great expositors. The philosophical systems mainly, according to the missionaries, attracted the interests of the learned Hindus who held them very high and the dogmas enshrined therein concerning God, the world, its origin, the soul, etc. are the core of Hindu belief system. By exposing the errors associated with the doctrines of Vedas, the missionaries hoped to create aversion in the minds of the learned Hindus who could then be motivated to embrace Christianity, 'the true religion'.  

The contradictory views held by different systems of philosophy were apparently one of the most authentic evidence that suggested  

96 Ballantyne, James Robert; Christianity Contrasted with Hindu Philosophy; Madden, London; 1859  
97 Goreh, Nehemiah; A Rational Refutation of the Hindu Philosophical Systems; Translated from original Hindi Manuscript by Fitz-Edward Hall; The Christian Literature Society for India, London and Madras, SPCK Press, Vepery; Section-I, Chapter-I; Pp.01-02
that the lack of unanimity renders them indubitable and thus they cannot be held to be infallible. 98

Philosophical Systems: Contradictions and Unanimity

The vast continuum of philosophical positions traversing the diverse extremes and even incorporating moderations were supported by a large corpus of Vedic literature divided into Sruti (Revelation) and Smriti (Tradition). In addition to this, there were different schools of thought seeking to resolve 'apparent contradictions' in the Vedic philosophy. The apparent lack of unanimity does not in actual sense make the different systems unrelated, as Ballantyne perceives stating, "As Dominican and Franciscan are brothers in asserting the infallibility of Rome; so are the Nyaya, the Sankhya, and the Vedanta, in asserting the infallibility of the Veda against the Buddhist," 99 Goreh further argues "though the systematists dissent among themselves on some few matters, yet, on almost every capital question they are alike as to method of consideration and as to reach and bias of intellect. They have all of them tenements of the same sort of foundation, and fabric, and model, however different on outer aspect." 100 While divergence in views invited criticism, the unity in doctrines too were outlined in the manner so as not to legitimize the doctrinal positions but to invalidate the arguments for being in mutual agreement.

98 Ibid; Section-I, Chapter-2; Pp.06-52
99 Ballantyne, Robert James; Christianity Contrasted with Hindu Philosophy; A General View of Hindu System; Madden, London; 1859; p.xvi
100 Goreh, Nehemiah; A Rational Refutation of the Hindu Philosophical Systems; Translated from original Hindi Manuscript by Fitz-Edward Hall; The Christian Literature Society for India, London and Madras, SPCK Press, Vepery; Section-II, Chapter.3; P.109
Notion of God and Creation

The different schools of philosophies, according to the missionaries, though represented rare brilliance in conceptualization but owing their being handed down over to generations after generations and being man-made they were disfigured over time incorporating gross errors. Sankhya doctrine in denying the existence of God had exposed the greatest error that it espoused. It also bewildered the missionaries that Sankhya claimed that the creation was not a conscious act of Brahma and nature to be the material cause of the world. Sankhya and Yoga were considered similar in almost every aspect except for the distinction that Sankhya desisted from believing in the existence of God. The idea of soul and notion of God, the creator baffled the missionaries for the kind of relation between soul and God and between the God and creation appeared to the missionaries abstruse and unreasonable. The missionaries had a tough time reconciling with the manner in which different philosophical schools tried to explain the existence of God, the world and the way in which the process of creation was attributed to 'incomprehensible' notions. God as an omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent entity was known to exist but it was argued that the world was not created out of his conscious will. It was like denying the attributes, which constituted the God as omnipotent entity. The concept that the soul, atoms, the minds and many other things including, no less than God had existence from eternity assumes God to be co-equal to other elements. Moreover, the claim of Nyaya, Vaishesika, Yoga and Vedanta, "that whatever God does, - as in framing the world, for instance, - He does solely for the purpose of
awarding to souls the fruit of their works, - is doing nothing of His own free will"\textsuperscript{101} is in fact denial of the faculty of intelligence that God possesses. In conceptualizing the God and creation in such a manner, the missionaries claimed, the Indian philosophers sought to undermine the attributes like greatness, absoluteness and sovereignty associated with the God. In attributing the eternal self-existence of soul, and laying out its course of ‘emancipation’ from ‘bondage’ the absolute authority of God over soul is made disputable. Moreover, the way these schools framed their arguments and the intellectual framework in which these arguments were located appeared illusory and in contravention to commonsensical knowledge. The confidence that the Hindus had in their arguments was so much complete that, “he who warmly insisted upon the existence of the discrepancies gains credit only for being ignorant of the recognized means of harmonious reconcilement.”\textsuperscript{102}

VEDANDA SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY

Vedanta school of philosophy was identified as the most popular one among the Hindus. Vedanta for the missionaries appeared to be theoretically monotheistic by its insistence on knowledge (jnana) to be only real being that exists. Knowledge according to the Vendantists simply knowledge that existsand it is not attempted to be defined as anything lest it may lead to

\textsuperscript{101} Goreh, Nehemiah; A Rational Refutation of the Hindu Philosophical Systems; Translated from original Hindi Manuscript by Fitz-Edward Hall; The Christian Literature Society for India, London and Madras, SPCK Press, Vepery; Section-II, Chapter.1;P.82
\textsuperscript{102} Ballantyne, Robert James; Christianity Contrasted with Hindu Philosophy; A General View of Hindu System; Madden, London; 1859; p.xxii
contradictions. Such a conceptualisation for the missionaries appeared at variance with the European view, which regarded knowledge as the synthesis of subject and object. The Vedanta’s dictum that world exists due to ignorance (ajnana) and soul is God claiming, “that art thou” and the concept of monism had a delegitimising impact on the idea of God and Creation as held in Christianity. The kinds of existence held by Vedanta were described as true, practical and apparent. True existence are assumed to be veritable and predicable to Brahma itself while the practical ones are not found to be existing veritably and it is due to ignorance that they are assumed to be existing veritably; the apparent existence resembles practical one but differs in its being ignorance of occasional nature that even depends on reasoning in addition to ignorance. 

The concept of a creator of the world (Isvara) all-wise and all-powerful and Brahma who is without quality but eternal, the doctrine of transmigration of soul and again insistence on the idea of ignorance and non-existence of world as propounded by Vedanta school were understood to be its cardinal principles. The conceptualization of Brahma as void of quality and rejection of sensory organs as false in substantiating the arguments and to conceive soul as eternal and self-existence were contrary to the manner in which Christian theological positions. Moreover, the Vedanta doctrine identifying soul as one with the Supreme Spirit and claiming the world to be illusory and therefore false and unwillingness to qualify the Brahma made it to appear to the missionaries as a system which does not deserve to be called a theistic one.

103 Ibid, p.xxxi
104 Goreh, Nehemiah; A Rational Refutation of the Hindu Philosophical Systems; Translated from original Hindi Manuscript by Fitz-Edward Hall; The Christian Literature Society for India, London and Madras, SPCK Press, Vepery; Section-III, Chapter.1;Pp. 111-116
105 Ibid; Sec. III, Chapter 10; Pp. 198-202
Vedas appeared to the missionaries as confusingly incorporating diverse theological concepts like monism, pantheism, cosmogonism, theism and atheism. Saldanhasy outlines the philosophical arguments ingrained in Vedic literature identifiable with different theological concepts in following terms:

"Monism : Brahmana (only is real, the world is unreal)
Pantheism : Brahmana = world (The world is real but is Brahman itself)
Cosmogonis: Brahmana + World (The world in its present form is an effect of Brahmana; there is no plurality of soul).
Theism: Brahmana + World + Souls (The world and the souls in their present form are an effect of Brahman).
Atheism: Matter & Soul (There is no Brahmana)."

In their theological engagements with Vedantists, the missionaries appear somewhat in defensive mode. The difficulty faced by them in constructing a criticism for vedantism may be best explained in following terms:

"Vedantism has stood more syllogims, dilemmas and other quibbles than our slow western minds can well dream of. It has a solid foundation, for there is nothing positive which it says about

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106 Saldanhasy, A; The Vedic Foundation; Manuscript; Academy Records; 1917; p.197.
God that we may dare to reject; it will easily prick holes or at least weaken parts in our own system."\textsuperscript{107}

Comparing the Vedanta philosophy with Christian scholasticism, the missionaries distinguished their system as the one based on the sense of experience and the existence of a creator, the God. God, for the philosophy of the Christians was essentially and primarily the first cause and the prime mover. Father Dandoy explains it more precisely in the following terms, "we are never tempted to deny to existence of the world of senses. It is the very basics of our system.... To suppress it would amount to cutting the ground under our very feet. We shall rather sacrifice anything than surrender the world of experience, because to surrender that would be to surrender all."\textsuperscript{108}

For the Vedantists, the starting point is the supreme, the absolute. The world is explained in function of Him, the supreme, the absolute – who is unlimited, independent and in consequence unrelated. The Vedanta's claim that "atman is Brahman" or "Thou art that" is explained, as "the supreme unsupported support of my existence is the supreme unsupported support of the existence of the world."\textsuperscript{109}

The advaita teaching of unreality of world posed a problem wherein the existence of world itself was questioned within the concept of maya (illusion) to the bewilderment of the

\textsuperscript{107} Dandoy, G, SJ; The Doctrine of the Unreality of the World According to the Advaita; Manuscript; Academy Records; 1913; p.104.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid; p.100.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid; p.113.
missionaries. The advaita teaching conceptualising existence of the world was supposedly explained in terms of three point of view viz – (i) Seen by the people that live in it, (ii) Examined by the philosopher, and (iii) seen in the light of the Veda. Father Dandoy best sums up the difficulty the missionaries were supposed to face in their engagements with vedantists:

“"It is useless, I think in our controversies with the vedantists to take up the first and last point of view. The first, because if we tell him : the world is seen, therefore it is, he will either smile or answer by a ‘concedo totum’ as far and as long as you see it .... Still less the last – for then we give him the most advantageous ground. If we start from God we will find it impossible to prove a priori, that he is or even can be cause or creator.”"\textsuperscript{110}

The missionaries hoped to counter vedantist teaching on the second point of view; i.e., of the philosopher as they considered that the theory based on the analysis of causality yielded them advantageous ground. To them, the theory appeared poorly conceptualised and mangled.\textsuperscript{111}

SANKARA’S ADVAITA

The advaita teaching of Sankara offered puzzling set of speculations and suppositions, which became all the more complex for the missionaries on finding that the Indian mind had accepted if by raising it to sacrosanct status. The theory of avidya i.e., ignorance

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid; p.139.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid.
propounded by Sankara considered it apara vidya on lower knowledge, or error when creator is distinguished from creation. Such suppositions stood in contravention to the Christian scholasticism and intended to render it inferior. Therefore, it was probably cautioned: “when we speak to educate Indians let us not exaggerate our knowledge of the supreme – let us not insist too much on the necessity of defining the indefinable by this or that attribute (e.g. personality)”\textsuperscript{112} rather it was suggested, “God, as the Vatican Council has it in its beautiful definition, is incomprehensible.”\textsuperscript{113}

The missionaries found it difficult to express their agreement with Sankara’s theory and felt it bizarre to accept him in the face of direct evidence available on the basis of the experience of senses. The missionaries could not help themselves into accepting a theory so contrary to their own for Sankara emphasised the identification for the nature of self with that of the God while they experienced it daily that the self i.e., ‘I’ was being, thinking, willing and perpetually changing. Yet, in the face of the already held beliefs among the Indians, they had no reservation in acceding themselves to Sankara’s doctrine, saying, “much of our scholastic psychology has to be retouched – or at least formulated anew if we want to render it acceptable to Indian mind.”\textsuperscript{114}

The missionaries were able to see the disjunction between their own position and that of Sankara’s on the theory of cause and effect. They say, “the natural object of our intellect is the actuality, the substance, potentiality, accidents, effects are always for us

\textsuperscript{112} Dandoy, G, SI; An Essay on the Unreality of the World According to Avidya; Manuscript; Academy Records; 1914; pp 392-393.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid; p. 393.
something hanging mysteriously between being and non-being.” The problem of the missionaries was compounded in reading Indian mentality which held the beliefs in consonance of Sankara’s theory and thus believed” we are really only the channels of His divine action not a separate source of energy.” The missionaries intended to counter it by arguing that, “there must be a break somewhere."

DOCTRINE OF AVATARAS AND BHAKTI

The missionaries believed that the concept of Avataras or Incarnation was devised to satisfy the urge of the people who wanted something akin to their own nature to worship. The Supreme God, particularly Vishnu, was believed to be taking avataras repeatedly and appearing on the earth in different forms to deliver the world from different kinds of evils. The missionaries mainly concerned themselves with the incarnations of Vishnu as Rama and Krishna, which had the popularity among the masses through the epics like Ramayana, Ramcharitamanas and Mahabharata. The cult of Bhakti had divine figures like Rama and Krishna at it centre.

Bhakti was considered devotional faith centred around one supreme God. In Bhakti, the missionaries were able to see the elements of Christianity in the form of the concept of personal God of love and complete devotion. The other reason for upholding Bhakti for them was their understanding that, “the doctrine of Bhakti

115 Ibid; p. 394.
116 Ibid; p. 395.
117 Ibid.
118 Osborne, Rev. Dennis; Vedism; Or, Speculative Hinduism; Chapter- iii;p.56; Grant & Faires, Philadelphia; Pub. 1884
certainly bears witness to a great truth, namely that religion must appeal to the heart and fulfill its aspirations, that man is not a purely spiritual substance and that pure intellectualism will never satisfy them.\(^{119}\) Bhakti was seen as a path of love and devotion in opposition to that of knowledge. Even the simplicity of the teachings espoused in Bhakti appeared to the missionaries showing reflection of Christian doctrines. Tulsidas's teaching that, "in Kaliyuga, neither spiritual concentration, nor sacrifice, nor knowledge is of any avail; men's only hope is in hymning Ram,"\(^{120}\) perhaps had nothing to counter the message of the Christ as propagated by the missionaries. Simplicity of the teachings apart, Bhakti preachers were apparently not hesitant in emphasising that the goal was to "escape from this ocean of delusion and from the weary rounds of birth and rebirths."\(^{121}\)

The supposed presence of Christian elements in Bhakti led the missionary to endeavour for discerning the historical factors responsible for Christian influence on Bhakti. They were aware of the similarities that the Bhakti needed an incarnate in the same manner in which Christianity was conceived around the Christ. Besides it, there were a number of similarities like celebration of Christmas and Janmashtami, depiction of child Krishna with Devaki and Mary with Child Jesus in paintings, boyhood exploits of Rama, Krishna and Jesus and so on. But for the missionaries, Christianity had the historical evidences to support it while Rama and Krishna for them appeared legendary and mythical.\(^{122}\)

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119 Severin, F.O., SJ; Bhakti in the Ramcharatamanas of Tulsidas; Manuscript; Academy Records; 1918; p. 238.
120 Ibid; p.219.
121 Ibid; p.214.
122 Horny, Eugene, SJ; Who is a Myth, Christ or Krishna? Manuscript; Academy Records; 1918; pp 283-309.
To further support their proposition of Christian influence on Bhakti, the missionaries even quoted Sir Bhandarkar suggesting that “the stories of Krishna’s boyhood brought by Abhiras and others were developed after they came to India... The Goanese and the Bengali often pronounce the name Krishna as Kris or Kristo and so the Christ of Abhiras was recognised as the Sanskrit Krishna.”

The missionaries had also to engage themselves in such efforts probably in face of the allegations of their opponents, in this case the Bhakti preachers; that Christianity’s edifice was built on the borrowings from Indian teachings and scriptures.

The most disturbing component for the Bhakti for the missionaries was according to them total disregard for the elements of morality in the teachings of the Bhakti preachers. For them, the life stories of Krishna appeared replete with sensual passions propounding an erotic religion. But Ram appeared to them upholder of morality and noble action.

The propounders of Bhakti while spreading the message of Bhakti also tried to incorporate the philosophical thoughts in their teachings. The simplicity of the Bhakti made it intelligible to the common followers and at the same time it was also able to engage different schools of philosophy in simplified forms. Ramayana, Ramcharitmanas, Mahabharata and other Bhakti writings were also known to the missionaries to be having their foundations in the various philosophical principles.

SAMSAKARAS: HINDU SYSTEM OF RITES

123 Vanhoutte, Charles, SJ; The Life of Krishna; Manuscript; Academy Records; 1918; p. 275.
124 Severin, F.O., SJ; Bhakti in Ramcharitmanas of Tulsidas; Manuscript; Academy Records; 1918; p.240.
Rites accompanied by ceremonies and rituals are central to any religious system based on common beliefs and practices. The missionaries witnessed that the Hindus used to practice a large number of rites and rituals. In fact, it appeared to them that almost entire activities of Hindus were incorporated into various rites of different types giving religious sanctity to every aspects of life. Father Kapali writes, "It is said of the Hindu that he is born religiously, lives religiously and dies religiously. His everyday life is an endless succession of religious rites and ceremonies, which must be observed with scrupulous care. Besides the daily religious duties, forty samsakaras are prescribed for a Hindu in the Dharmashastras." A Hindu is supposedly required to pass through many ceremonies and rites from his birth to death that even extends before one's birth and persists even after the death. These are called samsakaras which starts variously from Garbhadhana (impregnation) to shraddha i.e. funeral rites.

A special emphasis on learning these rites was given by the missionaries from very early days and missionaries like D'Nobili, Beschi and John D'Britto even sought refuge in these rites to initiate and promote their proselytizing activities. The missionaries often felt that the knowledge of these rites and ceremonies was extremely important to establish the missionary activities in India on solid foundation amidst a vast population that was extremely religious and believed in daily practice of numerous rites and rituals.

It was not easy for the missionaries to decipher the real meaning and justification of these samskaras. The missionaries tried to understand them through their own system of sacraments and they

125 Kapali, S, SJ; The Hindu Samsakaras; P.389; Typed; Academy Records; 1934
126 Kapali, S, SJ; Hindu Ritual ; P. 411; Typed; Academic Records; 1933
even called the samsakaras as Vedic sacraments. "We have seen what a number of religious ceremonies a Hindu has to perform during his lifetime. Do they not remind us of the sacraments, which a catholic has to recieve at various stages of his life, that help to sanctify him during his mortal career here as below?" at the same time they are not ready to accept them as true and pure sacraments. Father Siquiera writes, "I must apologise ...for the use of terms like 'sacrament', 'communion', 'sin', 'justification', which have in the catholic church a well defined, real and sacred meaning, and whose application to the halting practices of a false religion might therefore seem highly disrespectful, if not worse." They also attempted to understand the samsakaras through Jewish practice of cleanliness.

It appeared to the missionaries that the real purpose and motive behind samsakaras were not clear and their religious and divine significance was difficult to understand. Father Siquiera writes, "Besides a sacramental system cannot be evolved unless the idea of sin and justification is clear and correct.....the Vedic idea of sin and justification was neither clear nor correct." It was felt by the missionaries an unnecessary exercise to relate the samsakaras to religion as they say, "To conclude, we have to avow that the Hindus are religious minded to the core but unfortunately too often in the wrong line. They are bound from birth to death and again from death to birth by the fetters of superstition; seeing religion where there is none, putting in religion where they wish to, sanctioning with-religion even the items of daily life." But the missionaries hoped that the Hindu practice of samsakaras would one day lead them to Christianity which has more clear and defined system of sacraments.

127 Kapali, S, SJ; The Hindu Samsakaras; P.401; Typed; Academy Records; 1934
128 Siquiera, T, SJ; The Vedic Sacraments; P.227; Typed; Academy Records; 1933
129 Ibid; P.247
130 Tigga, V, SJ; Hindu Kanyadana; P.131; Typed; Academy Records; 1934
as they believed: “Still to study what pagans call ‘sacraments’ is to feel one’s heart burn to give them the true Sacraments and graft them into the true Vine.”

MODERN HINDU MOVEMENTS

The missionaries had to contend with a growing number of movements in Hinduism seeking to reform, reorganize and revive the Hindu religion. These movements were organized in different forms preaching different theological –ideological positions. The most famous among them were Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, Ramakrishna Mission and Theosophical society. Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833) founded the Brahmo Samaj espousing the cause of universal theism based on strictly monotheistic principles. Ramakrishna Mission was started by Swami Vivekanand (1863-1902), disciple of Swami Ramkrishna Paramhans with the aim spreading the universal message of Vedanta as illustrated by Ramakrishna. Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824-83) founded Arya Samaj giving the call to “Go back to Veda” considering it infallible and divine. Theosophical society was founded in New York in 1875 by a Russian lady Madam H. P. Blavatsky and an American Colonel H. S. Olcott. Theosophical Society assumed national role under the leadership of Annie Besant who preached the wisdom of Sri Krishna and Gita and even led Home Rule Movement along with Bal Gangadhar Tilak. The leaders of these movements were fully aware of the challenges that were posed to India by western civilization and by the Christian missionaries. Therefore they strongly felt the need of a new philosophy without sacrificing the genuine spiritual heritage of India and they also strongly advocated social reforms and worked hard for the realization of the same.

131 Siquiera, T, SJ; The Vedic Sacraments; P.247; Typed; Academy Records; 1933
The missionaries termed these movements as 'modern' revival movements seeking to meet the missionary challenge both organizationally and theologically. The missionaries sought to refute the claims of doctrinal superiority of these movements by engaging with them theologically. As these movements mainly tried to reform the Hindu society by criticizing the social evils and at the same time by attempting to prove that these social evils had no sanction of Hindu religion. The missionaries criticism of the prevailing social evils in the Hindu society were sought to be answered by these movements in different manners, yet the missionaries saw that such attempts in social reforms and re-interpretation and revision of theological position would not serve the purpose of prozeletysation. Hence criticising these 'modern, movements was necessitated. Father Balam writes, "The Arya Samajist is inconsistent and often absurd. The Brahmo Samajist is heard by none but a few Unitarians.... The Vivekanandist is too busily engaged in flinging mud at the West, to stop to explain his own position."\(^{132}\)

Arya Samaj was presented as an organisation involving itself in propaganda but having self-contradictory doctrines. The missionaries also alleged that Arya Samaj copied their method in propaganda and social works and even in conversions. Though the missionaries praise Arya Samaj's work in the field of education they were critical of the manner in which Christianity was portrayed by Dayanand's Arya Samaj. They bitterly complained that Dayanand's approach was biased and without any attempt to understand Christianity in its proper context. It was also accepted that the Arya Samaj movement was able to inspire a sense of self pride and national consciousness among the Indian people. The missionaries

\(^{132}\) Balam, L.M.; Back to the Veda; Typed; P.05; Academic Records; 1932
felt that Dayanand's call for back to Veda was a cunning proposition for it satisfied the national feelings, discarding all the indefensible Hindu customs and rites and accepts all the modern inventions and science as part of Veda. Father Verstraeten says, "For the missionaries the chief conclusion is that Arya Samaj is a dangerous body. All agree that they are staunch enemies. Hence we (missionaries) have to be on the look-out for their attacks, in which they always mix nationalism and religion." \(^{133}\)

To the missionaries, the monks of Ramakrishna Mission were the practitioner of the virtues of high order and believer in the dictum of 'renunciation' and 'Detachment' of the world. The missionaries even felt that Vivekanand's acceptance of having witnessed in Ramakrishna Paramhans, Christ's message of 'love thy neighbour' which the monks were able to practice causing obstacles in the path of Christian conversions. The missionaries could not reconcile with the idea that every religion was valid and an expression of divinity, they considered only Christianity to be the true religion. The missionaries were also not approving the manner in which the mission was enlisting support in Europe and America which they saw as a weakness in Christian faith. Father Schepers writes, "At first sight we are tempted to say that this movement has done much harm to the action of the Church. The intolerance of the catholic religion in particular is proposed by them as hateful. The violent attacks of Vivekanand and some of his -successors against the Christian missionaries and the Christian preachers, the blasphemies against Christ who in comparison put on the same plane as Krishna and Shiva are certainly not a remote preparation to conversion." \(^{134}\)

\(^{133}\) Verstraeten, A, SJ; Arya Samaj; Typed; P.533; Academy Records; 1931

\(^{134}\) Schepers, H, SJ; The Ramakrishna Mission; Tped; P.165-167; Academic Records; 1931
Theosophy movement in India was based on the system of religion, science and practical life taught by Madame Blavatsky and Col. H.S. Olcott. It had mainly two dimensions—esoteric and exoteric. It was also aimed at reviving the fundamental aspects and core teachings of traditional and indigenous religions. In India, a large number of Europeans and Americans followers of Theosophy society devoted themselves for the advancement of its aims and objectives. The missionaries felt that, neglecting its fundamental objects "Indian theosophists do (did) not work for humanity but for India alone."\textsuperscript{135} Though the missionaries appreciated the social works of the society, they were critical of Mrs. Annie Besant's plunge in Home Rule movement and her repeatedly shifting stance. They felt that even the Indians viewed her with suspicion.\textsuperscript{136} The missionaries also countered the claim of revelation by the Theosophists and reiterated their faith in the "exclusive" and "comprehensive" revelation in the Bible with the sole authority of the Church to interpret it.\textsuperscript{137} Theosophists posed a challenge to the missionaries in the fact that they too had originated in the west yet they were not led by their claim of being a superior religion neither claimed to be a part of 'civilizing mission'.

**CONCLUSION**

_A Hindu, for instance, should see whether what is called Hinduism is self contradictory and obscure or whether the Hindus have one single and uncorrupted belief admitting no different sects_

\textsuperscript{135} Gillet, C; SJ; Theosophy: The Theosophical Society in India, Manuscript; P317; Academy Records; 1916
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid; Pp. 317-318
\textsuperscript{137} Adiakalam, Xavier; Theosophy: Historical and Doctrinal; Manuscript; Academy Records; 1929
and no corruption from a purer state; he should moreover examine the means that are used by Hindu priests to moralize people and consider whether their books, ceremonies, festivals and temples instead of being an incitement to repentance for sin are rather sources of temptations to bad actions and of disturbance to the mind. He should lastly consider whether the Hindu beliefs are based on undeniable historical facts and whether Hinduism from its nature is universal.\(^\text{138}\)

The statement cited above best sums up the missionary understanding of the tests of a 'true religion'. The religion according to the missionaries should be internally corroborative and not contradictory and there is no space for numerous paths but one and only one 'right' thus 'divine' path for salvation. The other important points that were repeatedly raised were that of 'universality' and 'historical' basis of a religion. By universality they meant one that is present everywhere and applicable to all races, nationality, intellectual ability and circumstances. They believed that religion should be historically verified so as to establish its claim of 'truth'. 'Morality' was also considered an important aspect of a religion.

The missionaries sought to comprehend Indian philosophy and tradition to further enrich their understanding so as to engage with the Indian philosophers on theological plane. Their stated purpose for studying Indian philosophy was to intellectually counter the higher section of the society as they were of the opinion that the lower section were 'simple minded' and were easy to convert\(^\text{139}\). But to their dismay they later found that the Indian philosophy had

\(^{138}\) The Universal Religion; Part II; Pp.05-06; St. Joseph's College Press, Trichinopoly; Undated Pamphlet; Vidyajyoti Library, Rajniwas Marg, New Delhi

\(^{139}\) Dandoy, G, S.J.; The Purpose of our Academy; Catholic Orphan Press, Calcutta; 198; p.10.
percolated to almost every section of the Society shaping their mentality and lifestyle.

The Missionary strategy to counter the Indian philosophical system may be best summed up in their own words: "Hinduism is a tree which will never fall till the handle of the axe that fells it is cut from its own wood – Ancient Indian prophecy."\(^{140}\) Although, the missionaries themselves were perturbed by the fact that the term "Hindu" was absent in Indian scriptures and the natives were unaware of such nomenclature, such 'prophecy' indicates the strategy supposed to be followed by them. They rarely engaged themselves in constructing arguments that could have proven superiority of Christian scholasticism; instead they repeatedly emphasised that the Indian philosophy contained errors and distortions and the missionaries had the responsibility to remove them so that it might be able to find its culmination in Christ.\(^{141}\)

The missionaries' inclination towards drawing comparisons between Indian schools of philosophy and Christian scholasticism and attempts at contrasting and comparisons in the earlier phase seems to giving way to lesser direct engagements. In the first half of 20\(^{th}\) century we rarely find any comparisons like that of Ballantyne or Morris\(^{142}\). Unlike the works like that of Goreh\(^{143}\), in the later phase, even in the case of representation of Indian philosophy; the missionaries offer simple narratives with little effort at

\(^{140}\) Wallace, William S.J.; Sanatan Dharma: The Hope and Despair of it in the Indian Heart; Typed; Academy Records; 1912; p.16.

\(^{141}\) Wallace, W. S.J.; Indifference & Renunciation As Taught in the Hindu Shastras; Typed; Academy Records; 1913; pp 20-21.

\(^{142}\) Please refer to Ballantyne's Christianity Contrasted with Hindu Philosophy; A General View of Hindu System; Madden, London; 1859; & Morris' An Essay Towards the conversion of Learned and philosophical Hindus; printed for JGF & J. Rivington; London

\(^{143}\) Goreh, Nehemiah; A Rational Refutation of the Hindu Philosophical; SPCK, Calcutta; 1860
deconstructing the framework. The criticism offered are repetitively simple; the goal that the Indian philosophy is still to find its culmination in Christ and therefore it is required that the distortions and exaggeration are removed is stated again and again. The favourite theme with the missionaries is to question historicity and divinity of the system and wherever convenient, borrowings from Christian theology are cited. In addition to that, the question of morality is considered serious one and ‘amorous’ conduct of Indra and Krishna along with tantra practices are referred to.

It should be kept in mind that the missionaries of the 19th and 20th century had arrived in India after having themselves engaged in the modern intellectual ambience of Europe. In Europe, it may be said that even modernity had to contend with Christian scholasticism and consequently there was a kind academic environment wherein the missionaries had to learn to adapt their discourse in accordance with the then prevailing modern discourse. On their arrival to India, the missionaries and the western scholars alike discovered an intellectual environment different from that of Europe. The Indian philosophical discourses had their own unique intellectual set up which missionaries sought to understand and counter as for them it was having a style of reasoning different from post enlightenment rationality. At the same time, these philosophical schools furthered their arguments in the framework of an intellectual tradition not related to the Semitic ones. Missionaries also sometime felt that the Indian philosophy ascribed to Vedas and other Hindu systems had evolved in the course of their engagement with Buddhism; attributing a kind of reaction against the Buddhism thereby attempting to locate a conflicting socio-religious context.  

144 Osborne, Rev. Dennis; Vedism; Or, Speculative Hinduism; Chapter- iii; Pp.46-47; Grant & Faires, Philadelphia; Pub. 1884
The missionaries also attributed to the Vedas a process of evolution that further proved their position that these systems were neither revealed nor divine. The notion of evolution also made it implicit that an understanding of such systems necessitates their location within the context of the discipline of History as conceptualized in the modern west. It was further attempted to elucidate that non-adherence of Indian philosophy and traditions to the tenets of history deprived them of their claim as a valid knowledge system. The historicity of divine incarnations of Rama and Krishna as held by the Hindus was disputed hence their divinity was questioned. In their readings of the Indian philosophy and traditions, the missionaries referred to the academic works of the modern-western scholars and even the Indian ones that were primarily imbued with the thought that went into the making of the discourse of Orientalism.

The missionaries acknowledged the reforms undertaken by socio-cultural reform movements like Arya Samaj, Brahma Samaj, Ramkrishna Mission and the Theosophists. The social work undertaken by them were considered beneficial for the society. The missionaries described these movements as modern but at the same time they refused to agree to the theological positions of these movements. The overall framework of these movements failed to convince the missionaries of their being a valid religious system and appeared to them contradictory and repugnant.

The process of representation and thereby reconstruction of the Indian philosophy and tradition inherently provided the Missionaries an hegemonic intellectual position whereby they sought
to locate the entire Indian knowledge system within their own
discourse that had evolved through a process of interaction between
the Christian scholasticism and post-enlightenment modern west.
Lack of unanimity among different systems was represented as
contradiction and dispute and agreement on certain issues was again
shown as acceptance of errors thereby making them mutually invalid.

The missionaries sometimes even found themselves taking an
ambivalent position vis-à-vis Indian philosophy and tradition. They
were probably not able to reach a consensus among themselves as to
how to tackle the problems offered by Indian philosophy and diverse
systems in which it was ingrained. For them, the Indian philosophy
with its numerous customs and traditions appeared a confused lot
without having a central system of authority and validation. It was
perhaps owing to their difficulty in locating the Indian philosophical
systems within a meta-narrative, that a coherent position in this
context appeared problematic and impractical. A shift in missionary
readings of the Indian philosophy and tradition may be found from
the 19th century to the first half of the 20th century. The enthusiasm
for understanding through comparison and contrast gave way to a
kind of acceptance and lesser will to directly engage with the Indian
philosophical system.

It may be argued that the missionaries though appeared
genuinely inclined in intellectually comprehending Indian
philosophy and tradition, they could not dissociate themselves from
the theological-intellectual grooming that they received in the west.
The notion of 'divine' and divinity in religion was sought to be
located within the framework of modern discourses wherein
legitimacy of a system was to be tested. The historicity, uni-linearity,
uniformity, monotheism etc. were celebrated as virtues and diversity,
polytheism, idolatry, monism etc. were disapproved and considered academically inept. It may be said that the missionaries were attempting to contend with the Indian intellectual-theological and philosophical discourses by locating them within the framework of modern discourses and thereby challenging their academic-intellectual legitimacy.