

GLOBALIZATION AND INDIAN CHRISTIANS

by Rev. David Scott, Executive Director, American Council, Ramabai Mukti Mission

Globalization has been good for India in multiple ways. The economy of India is advancing so fast that the infrastructure cannot keep up. Shortage of trained and educated workers is now a problem in many areas. For some jobs, employers are now hiring people from Europe and other countries as well. India is one of the leading Asian Tigers and is expected to be among the top five economies in the near future. Education, medicine, diplomacy and much more all indicate a growing international influence among all the nations of the world. India is rapidly rushing forward as a world power.

In the midst of this incredible growth, what is the status of Indian Christians in World Missions? Has globalization affected the Church and the Christians of India? Before we analyze this question, let's prepare a Biblical framework for the same.

The call to World Missions started way back in the book of Genesis, specifically with the Abrahamic Covenant in Genesis, chapters 12, 15 and 17. Abram (later his name was changed to Abraham) was to be blessed and be the father of a great nation, Israel, for the purpose of providing a Savior to reconcile sinful man to a holy God. In Gen 12:3 it says "...and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." Later we discover that this is a reference to the Messiah, the Savior of the world, Who would come through the lineage of Abraham. Chapters 15 and 17 expand and explain the Covenant more fully.

"Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, 'As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendents after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.'" Genesis 17:3-7

This was an everlasting covenant (v. 7) which clearly expands it to Jesus Christ, Who was to come, since Abraham's kingdom was a temporal kingdom. In verses 5 and 6 it describes Abraham as a father of many nations, not just Israel. The Abrahamic Covenant is restated later with what is often called the Davidic and Jeremiah Covenant which simply says the same thing: that a Messiah will come and He will give His life for the sins of the world. There are a multitude of verses in the OT that tell us to go to all nations, but usually we go to the NT and the teachings and examples of Jesus Christ. The following are some from an abundance of Scriptures:

Matthew 28:19: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...."

Luke 24:47: "...and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

Acts 1:8: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Mark 11:17: "...Is it not written: 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations'?..."

The first church in Jerusalem was not excited about leaving their home so God allowed persecution and scattered the church to many areas (Acts, chapter 8). The Apostle Paul was probably the most active world missionary at that time. It is interesting to note that Paul would seem like a natural to do Jewish evangelism but He went to the nations of the world. Paul was not only cross-cultural but cross-national as well.

So let's return to my prior question, "Where is India in World Missions?" Below is a chart of several countries and the number of missionaries from those countries that serve in other nations.

ASIA					
Country	Population	No. of Agencies	Total National Missionaries	No. of Missionaries in Other Countries	% of Missionaries in Other Countries
India	1,013,661,777	233	41,064	352	<0.01%
Taiwan	22,401,000	21	300	54	18%
Japan	126,714,220	56	449	228	51%
South Korea	46,843,989	140	12,279	10,646	87%
Pakistan	156,483,155	17	180	29	16%
Philippines	75,966,500	123	3188	856	27%
Singapore	3,566,614	39	773	407	55.50%
AFRICA					
Kenya	30,080,372	54	686	70	10%
Nigeria	111,506,095	66	3351	448	13%
South Africa	40,376,579	133	2548	1465	79.4%
Uganda	21,778,450	20	775	36	5%
Source: Operation World 2005 Patrick Johnstone and Jason Mandryk Pgs. 747-752					
NOTE: The above is a random sample of countries in Asia and Africa					

The number of Indian missionaries is impressive (41,064), since India is not a Christian country. But, as you look at the number of missionaries that go to other countries (352), it is quite low.

The percentage of missionaries going to the world from India is less than 1%. From the sampling of countries on the chart, you will notice that this percentage is by far the lowest. Could it be that globalization has not touched India in regard to World Missions?

The most common response to this analysis is that India has so many unreached people that they cannot send many to other countries. This temptation is common among most churches in other nations of the world as well. Perhaps many, if not most, of us have heard the following in our own local church or fellowships: “We need to meet the needs of our own people in our church, evangelize our own neighborhood and community, and then we will ‘go into all the world’.” I submit to you that in almost all cases that is a nice and seemingly rational stance. But is this obedience to Jesus Christ and His call to go to the world?

Let’s get back to the Scriptural mandate given by God to go to all the nations of the world. World Missions are emphasized from beginning to end of the Bible. Acts 1:8 is the classic Scripture for World Missions, especially because Jesus Christ specifically gave this “ordering of the church to go to the entire world” immediately before His departure from the earth and His ascension into heaven. These are the last spoken words of Jesus Christ. Therefore, Acts 1:8 has often been a model for evaluation of one’s mission obedience. The four categories of Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth provide a very practical guideline for our mission activity, prayers and giving. Christians and churches should be going and giving to all four areas, not just one. Resources and missionaries must be going to all four areas. The last of the areas is the most difficult: going to all the nations of the world. To see this happen, many things are required, but one practical necessity is to become INTENTIONAL in our corporate and individual lives. Our Savior calls us to World Missions because He cares for all people of the nations.

We are all quite pleased that Thomas went to India and preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Could it be that we need to send thousands of Thomases to the ends of the earth if we want to be pleasing to our Lord? **Let’s go global.**

Mark 11:17: “...Is it not written: ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations’?...”



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