

**Review: Riley K. Smith, *India: Tales of Glory, Living Sacrifice Book Co., Bartlesville, OK, 2009***

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**A Complex Milieu of Persecution and Failure**

The history of Christianity in India is one of late and little progress, after initial murky beginnings with the Apostle Thomas in the 2<sup>nd</sup>C AD. Hinduism has always held a spiritual stranglehold over the land, but was violently interrupted with the sword of Islam in the 8<sup>th</sup>C, which largely dominated till the British arrived in the 19<sup>th</sup>C.

Sadly, the British East India Company sought only commercial gain, and actively *hindered* the gospel, the result being an antagonism to Christianity and a certain rewriting of history with Britain as India's villain. The Islamic Mughals which held sway for over a millennia just prior are conveniently ignored.

Today, the rise of Hindu nationalism (Hindutva) signals a full-circle return for Indians and presages a rise in Christian persecution.

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Origins of Indians are said to be from the Russian steppes as Aryans.

The Rig Veda was composed 1500BC but only put in writing 300BC. It has hymns to various Aryan gods and goddesses.

India's Supreme Court has stated, "no precise meaning can be ascribed to ... Hinduism." [p10] However, core beliefs include an ultimate reality of *Brahman*; the soul (*jiva*) is everlasting and developing across lives via reincarnation under the laws of *kharma*.

In the Acts of Thomas, written in Edessa cAD200, has a reluctant Thomas going to India who ended up as a slave taken to build King Gundaphores' palace.

Indian tradition has a more reasonable ring of truth, that a free Thomas went to the south of India but was killed by Brahmin priests near Pelayur in Kerala, AD70.

Written records of Christianity date from the 8<sup>th</sup>C, including the Kerala copper plates.

During Persia's Great Persecution (AD 340-404), many Christians fled from Shah Shapur II into India.

The Gupta dynasty ruled part of India from AD319-500.

In AD431, the Council of Ephesus condemned Nestorius for his claim that the divine nature of Christ was capable of suffering.

In 977, Mahmud of Ghazna raided northern India. This Turkish invasion continued till Delhi fell in 1202.

The Muslims massacred Buddhist monks and destroyed monasteries of Bihar.

The Turks ruled India for three hundred years.

In 1498, Vasco de Gama arrived in India from Portugal.

On 24/8/2008, Hindu extremists attacked Christians in Orissa state in response to the murder of a Hindu leader (for which Marxists claimed responsibility). At least 121 were killed.

Zoroastrian Parsees fled to northern India from Persia to the 7<sup>th</sup>C after Islam conquered.

The Muslim Mughals ruled India from the 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>C.

The Indian Mughal Akhbar tried to create a new religion *Din-i-Illahi* in an attempt to unify his subjects.

Shah Jahan, who built the Taj Mahal, waged a jihad against Christianity.

The last Mughal Emperor Aurungzeb reinstated the *jizya*.

Hindus believe washing in the Ganjes river cleanses from sin.

Karma is a great obstacle to evangelism as Hinduism is antagonistic to free will.

The British East Indian Company (BEIC) was concerned only with profit, and took measures to prevent religious conflict. By the end of the 1700s, they were openly anti-missionary with any Christian required to obtain a licence.

Missionary William Carey left for Calcutta in 1793 and arrived after five months, finding refuge in a Catholic Portuguese settlement.

The BEIC recruited Sepoys (native Indians) to protect colonial interests.

In the mid 19<sup>th</sup>C, the gospel became very popular amongst the Dalit caste.

The British troops were outnumbered 20:1 by Sepoys, which mutinied in 1857 after new-issue rifle cartridges were coated in cow and pig fat.

“Where is your Jesus now, we will shortly show what will become of the infidel dogs”. [p79]

A mission at Futtehguh was ransacked and destroyed.

The Indian National Congress was founded 1885.

Gandhi’s tactics, including the “Quit India” campaign, forced freedom concessions in 1935, and finally independence in 1947, which led to the formation of Pakistan and later East Pakistan (i.e., Bangladesh).

Gandhi was assassinated in 1948 by a National Volunteers association member (who advanced *Hindutva* ideology).