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Missiological Approaches to Religious Change**

Title:

**BELIEVING WITHOUT BELONGING: A BRIEF STUDY OF THE KHRIST BHAKTA  
MOVEMENT IN NORTH INDIA**

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Around Varanasi and other areas of North India, there is a Khristbhakta movement led by the Catholic Indian Missionary Movement and many other Protestant groups.

A theological discussion on this movement is a valuable contribution to the life and mission of the church in India. This movement is now the largest emerging group within Christianity in India.

The Khristbhaktas are the devotees of Jesus Christ. They can be called as seekers, who accept Jesus as the Bhagavan and also their as their satguru. They visit Christian centres and often draw their spiritual nourishment from these centres. Two such important centres we find in Uttar Pradesh: Yesu Darbar, Allahabad and Matridham Ashram, Varanasi.

We can call them as hybrid communities, those who are socially Hindus but spiritually Christians. We find many of such followers in parts of Bihar, Delhi, Haryana, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. Khristbhakta movement can also be termed as ‘churchless Christianity.’ This movement is sometimes also referred as ‘movements to Jesus’ and in the context of foreign missions as ‘insider movements’ or ‘people movement.’ Insider movements are defined as “popular movements to Christ that bypass both formal and explicit expressions of the Christian religion.”

The Khristbhaktas emerged as a religio-cultural response of the subaltern community in search of a new identity. The subaltern community who are at the margins negotiate the porous borders in search of their new identity and empowerment. They negotiate the borders of faith and culture for empowerment against social exclusion and marginalization in between their position of being socially Hindus but Christian by faith.

The paper analyzes the socio-religious realities of this movement especially the issues faced by the believers of this emerging church in terms of providing Pastoral care and counselling, issue of baptism as visible sign of a Christian faith, Discipleship, Fellowship and friendship of the Christian community and the issue of reservation benefits. The paper further explores theological and Missiological paradigms in attempting to understand the movement. It attempts to provide these answers through an empirical research done by the author among these believers found in and around Allahabad city.

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