

A review of Christian Education and Democracy in India edited by George Thadathil

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Bibliographic Information:

Name of the Book: A review of Christian Education and Democracy in India

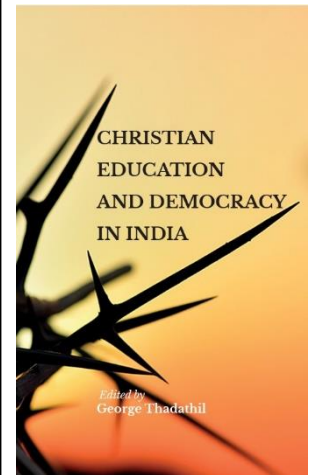
Author: George Thadathil (Ed.)

Publisher: Penprints, and Salesian College Publication

Language: English

ISBN: 978-8196657741

Price: INR 900 | \$ 20



The Editor of the book 'Christian Education and Democracy in India', Prof. George Thadathil, former Principal, Salesian College, Darjeeling, brings forth arguments in support of Christian Education's role in promoting democracy in India and the recognition it deserves. As an academician and independent researcher, his perceptively opportune observations are reflected in the planning and organization of the chapters.

This edited book is a cluster of scholarly works by reputed research scholars, educators and educational administrators across India sharing the same vision and mission. The title of the book is assertive and self-explanatory. The book is thoughtfully divided into four segments. The book narrates the journey of Christian Education from the past to the present age, leading to the possible future in Modern India. The book begins with a Dedication Page which is a humble gesture by the Editor for all those who have been a part of and have experienced Christian Education in its varied forms. The homage paid by the Editor in the beginning of the book is a very humbling experience for any reader.

This book contains a Foreword by Prof. Peter Ronald DeSouza, former Director, Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Shimla. The Foreword situates the contributions of Christian Education and offers reasons for it needing serious engagement by scholars and those in educational administration setting the promising tone of the book.

The Preface of the book provides the context that guided the Editor to take up a work of this magnitude. The book helps in understanding the context (vision) which led to the development of the Indian Constitution while appreciating diverse perspectives with a single motive of the development of the people into a true democratic country. The Editor, upholding a similar spirit and vision, welcomed diverse perspectives from a cross section of people in bringing this book to its fruition with the unwavering motive of highlighting the

relentless contribution of Christian Education towards the making of Indian Democracy. The book with its objectively written introduction providing a bird's eye view to each of the chapters gives a good start to a scholarly work of this caliber.

The four segments contain the four core areas reflecting the purpose of the book. Each segment leads to the other. The book begins with a theoretical frame (philosophy) leading to purposive interventions (practical actions) that take to authentication (proof) and finally to the existential rationale for the persistence and far-sightedness of Christian Education in India. As a reader, I was personally intrigued by the use of the term 'purposive intervention' in the title of Part II of the book. Intervention is called for when there is a pressing need/ a pressing issue that seeks resolution. The Editor has rightly presented the pressing need for Christian Education in promoting the cause of Secularism and Democracy in Modern India.

The book is inclusive in nature reflecting how Christian Education has promoted and continues to promote the cause of inclusiveness which is pertinent in carrying forward the cause of Indian Democracy. While the book appears to be written from Christian Education perspective, it reflects an extensive body of knowledge as vital testimonials of the selfless motive of Christian Education to serve the Indian citizens irrespective of their caste, creed, gender, religion, language and economic background. Christian Educational Institutions have been a home to the downtrodden and the abandoned. The prime focus has been on holistic and multidisciplinary education. There is no exaggeration in saying that Christian Education appreciates and values India's rich cultural heritage, its languages and arts and students at such institutes are motivated to learn more about India through their curricular, co-curricular and extension activities. In my opinion, this book will serve well as a reference book for students not only from Education Discipline but also other disciplines to understand the education system of our country and its development from a broader perspective. The Part III of this book is the crux and demands the attention of the readers. The Editor has justified his submission by providing readers with real-time examples.

Among the reasons for Christian Education rising to prominence the chapter on 'Dalit Appreciation of Christian Education' by Praveen Perumalla under Part I of the book gives us an idea on why Christian Education is here to stay. Christian Education is a service to mankind without any discriminatory motive and its potent impact is reflected in the demand among common people in favor of Christian Education as understood from the case study-based chapter. Christian Education's attempt to remain progressive with a forward-thinking is reflected in the chapter by Tom Kunnunkal which speaks about reaching out to the masses through Open and Distance Learning (ODL) and Vocational Training. Author Pius V. Thomas stresses upon Christian Identity achieved through Christian Educational Institutions' long-standing hustle to keep pace with and adapt to the changing time and situation without compromising on the vision and mission. The Indian identity presented in the book is that of a democratic and secular people encountering modernity and reframing it to their temperament and need. The book offers a philosophical perspective besides its apparent constructive and pragmatic stands.

The art on the cover page speaks volumes and reflects the hardships endured by Christian Education and the missionaries in the process of leaving an indelible mark in the society for the greater goal of mankind and in establishing an egalitarian society. The font size of the book, the paper quality, the cover pages, the color contrast are all added bonus and reasons to give this book a read and share with other academicians to understand the herculean contributions of Christian Education to the education system of our nation. The

language and writing style of the book are lucid and precise. The pricing of the book is reasonable considering the priceless knowledge that this book holds within.

There is a mindful acknowledgement of all those who helped in the process which is praiseworthy and it reflects academic integrity. The contributors, who are esteemed academicians with years of experience and credentials, add to the authenticity and richness of the book. Each and every chapter written by the respective authors are essential in understanding Christian Education and its Contribution for having helped create a Democratic India and for its continued preservation and sustenance.

The book under review gives hope and builds confidence in trusting Christian Education and its dedication to a cause - a Democratic India. I therefore recommend it to scholars across disciplines to give this book a mindful read.