



PILGRIM

MAGAZINE OF THE
FRIENDS OF THE
CHURCH IN INDIA



SEPTEMBER 2026 | EDITION 69



FRIENDS OF THE CHURCH IN INDIA



Mission Statement

The FCI shall seek to promote at a local level, in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland, interest in the life, work and mission of the Churches of India.

The FCI will focus on the Indian Churches' experience of Christian Unity, and will seek to understand the religious, political, economic, cultural, and social context of their ministry and mission.

The FCI will do this as a contribution to, and an encouragement of, ecumenical relationships in the United Kingdom.

Objectives

The promotion of the Christian Religion at a local level in England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland by:

- (a) Encouraging interest in the life, work, and mission of the Churches of India, with special reference to their experience of Christian Unity*
- (b) Facilitating understanding of the religious, political, economic, cultural, and social context of the Indian Churches' ministry and mission*
- (c) Making the Public Benefit of a contribution to, and an encouragement of, ecumenical relationships in the United Kingdom.*

Pilgrim Editorial Team

Revd Chellaian Lawrence
Cllr Eleanor Jackson
Revd Canon Premraj

Editor

Mr Sumanth Bommarthi

© 2026 Friends of the Church in India (1042850)



PILGRIM

Edition 69

September 2026

The Magazine of the Friends of the Church in India

Contents

Editorial	4
The Formation of the Church of South India: Exploring some Background Factors.....	6
Relevance of Gandhian Alternatives in the Context of Globalisation.....	12
The Church of South India	
An Ecumenical Vision and Its Continuing Challenge	22
South Asia Christian Youth Network (SACYN),.....	29
The South Asia Forum, Wantage, April-May 2026.....	31
Colonialism and Christian Missions in India	33
News from the Church of Bangladesh.....	38

Editorial

Dear Friends,

Greetings to you from the Editorial Team of the Friends of the Church in India.

In this edition of *Pilgrim*, we give thanks for the continuing witness of the Churches of India and South Asia, and for the friendships that bind us together across countries, churches and communities.



We hope this issue finds you strengthened in faith and renewed in hope. As followers of Christ, we are called not only to rejoice with those who rejoice but also to weep with those who weep, holding before God the pain and longing of our neighbours near and far.

Our hearts are especially with the people of Nepal following the devastating floods and landslides that have brought loss of life, displacement and damage to homes, roads, schools and places of care. We pray for those who grieve, for children and families whose lives have been disrupted, for communities cut off from essential services, and for all who are working courageously in rescue, relief and recovery.

We also continue to pray for peace in the Ukraine and for all those suffering because of war, violence and insecurity. May God help the leaders in the ways of peace, and strengthen those who work for mercy, dialogue and healing.

This issue reminds us of the breadth of the Church's calling: to remember our histories, to learn from faithful witnesses, to celebrate signs of renewal, and to stand alongside those who suffer. We give thanks for articles reflecting on the formation and

continuing challenge of the Church of South India, the relevance of Gandhian alternatives in a globalised world, and the enduring ecumenical vision that calls Christians to unity.

We are also grateful for reports from the South Asia Christian Youth Network (SACYN) gathering in Nepal and the South Asia Forum in Wantage, both of which speak of fellowship, shared learning and mission across the region and among partners. News from the Church of Bangladesh further reminds us of lives of devoted service, the importance of remembering those who have gone before us, and the need to pray continually for the ministries of churches, hospitals, schools and communities.

I would like to thank our contributors for their thoughtful reflections, and our editorial team for their careful time and effort in preparing the articles sent to us from various sources for publication in *Pilgrim*. May this edition encourage prayer, deepen fellowship, and renew our commitment to Christ's call to compassion, justice and unity.

Please send your submission of articles, reports, comments, book reviews, etc., for publication in *Pilgrim* in Word document format to editor.fci@gmail.com.

Thank you.

Sumanth Bommarthi

Editor

The Formation of the Church of South India: Exploring some Background Factors

Revd Canon Dhanaraj Charles Premraj

The Church of South India will be celebrating the 80th anniversary of its formation. We thank and praise God for the amazing way the Church of South India has grown and continues to grow by the grace of God.



Church union at that time which seemed impossible became a possibility by the grace and guidance of God. While reading the work of historians, one can only stand in awe of the tremendousness of this movement towards church unity. While there were theological discussions and administrative discussions all along the way, there were various matters that paved the way for the formation of the Church of South India. This is a short article about some of the factors that contributed to this great movement for unity.

Tranquebar Manifesto

The desire and conviction of the Indian Christians that the Church in India should be one was formally given expression in the first conference of the Indian clergy in May 1919 at a place called Tranquebar. Incidentally this is the actual location in where the first Protestant missionaries began their work. This event should be regarded as the starting point of the union story. This major landmark conference brought out a statement which came to be called the Tranquebar Manifesto. The manifesto stated that:

We believe that the union is the will of God, even as our Lord prayed that we might all be one, that the world might believe. We believe that union is the teaching of Scripture. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one

hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all.”¹

Desire for Equality

It is fascinating to note that gradually there developed a desire by the Indian Christians to participate in the governance of the church and in the decision making. Bengt Sundkler points out that in the South Indian Missionary Conference in 1900 of the 150 members who participated only 24 were Indian Christians. Even those 24 did not voice their views and remained quiet in the deliberations. This was generally the case in the mission administration: Indian Christians did not play a role in the decision making of the mission organisations.²

The Indian Christians had to struggle with their position in the Indian Church. The formation of the All-India Moslem League in 1906 made one Leader, Babu (Dr) Kali Charan Banerji to appeal, ‘Awake, Indian Christians. Swadeshism is in the air. Is it without lessons for us?’ The call to an indigenous church could also be seen as a determination to achieve self-governance.

Joseph Muir and others who prepared a pamphlet trying to explain “Why South India Churches are considering Union?” identify the growing desire among Christians to be “thoroughly Indian as well as truly Christian”.³ The pamphlet observes that “Christianity has suffered for too long in India from the handicap of unnecessary foreignness”. They also point out: “The most forward-looking Indians in these Churches are sure that they can hope to be truly Indian only if they get together, instead of remaining in the separate sheep-folds which a foreign denominationalism has provided.”⁴

¹ Bengt Sundkler, *Church of South India: The Movement Towards Union 1900 – 1947*, London, Lutterworth Press, 1954, p.101

² Ibid., p.33

³ Joseph Muir, W.J Noble, E.J. Palmer, G.E. Phillips, *Why South India Churches are Considering Union*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1929. p.13

⁴ Ibid., p.14

National movement for Independence

The political context in India during the 19th and 20th centuries had an impact on the people who became Christians. At the same time as the churches were growing under the British and other foreign mission work, there was the national struggle for Independence in India. Contrary to the notion that converts developed a sense of loyalty to the British Empire and that the British missionary enterprise had a hidden agenda to serve the British interests in India, Indian Christians began to think of a united church with indigenous leadership just as the whole country was struggling for freedom from foreign rulers.

In this context, some Indian Christians began to feel that the mission boards should join together and pool their “forms of church government and worship”.⁵ In fact a Scottish Presbyterian Indian minister from Bengal, the Revd Lal Behari Day, even in 1870 suggested a “scheme for an ecclesiastical union to include the essential principles of Episcopacy, Presbyterianism and Congregationalism”. Interestingly, Dr Pulney Andy formed an institution called the National Church of India in 1885, the same year in which the Indian National Congress was founded.⁶ He was convinced that there should be a movement in India to come together as one body. The National Church of India was for Andy “an attempt to overcome the ecclesiastical divisions by accepting a national programme”.⁷

Other Factors

A variety of other factors contributed to church union in South India. The missionaries who were working in South India even in the late 19th century began to feel the need to meet together in conferences

⁵ Ibid., p.24

⁶ Franklyn Jayakumar Balasundaram, “The Church of South India: A Historical Review”, in National Council of Churches Review, Vol. CXVII, Sept 1997, p.543.

⁷ Sundkler, pp.26, 27

and meetings and discussions in common interest. Such a desire gave rise to the holding of conferences at the local level and the provincial level all over India. Such conferences were held in Calcutta in 1855, at Benares in 1857, at Ootacamund in 1858 and Lahore in 1862.⁸ Subsequently such meetings and interaction among the missionaries led to a major meeting, called the first General Missionary Conference at Allahabad in 1872 in which 136 missionaries attended. At this conference, Rev. J. Barton, a CMS missionary from Madras, presented a paper “The Indian Church of the future” in which he demonstrated that “a certain approximation between the policies of all the leading missions was taking place”.⁹

There were other administrative changes that were adopted in the mission boards due to necessity which they would never have done in their home country. Sundkler says that while the Episcopalians took seriously the participation of the lay people of the church, the Congregationalists in India developed forms of church government which they had found unacceptable in Europe. In this context the missionaries were beginning to feel that what they had in common was of more importance than their differences.

Another major factor was the formation of the South India United Church. This was made possible by the coming together of the Reformed Church of America and the Free Church of Scotland mission in 1901. This was inspired by the Presbyterian union in South China in 1899.¹⁰ This was soon followed by another union in which the Congregational churches in South India and Ceylon united.

In 1908 these two united churches themselves united to form the South India United Church.¹¹

⁸ Ibid., p.23

⁹ Ibid., p.24

¹⁰ Balasundaram, p.544

¹¹ A.J. Arangaden, *Church Union in South India, Its Progress and Consummation*, Mangalore, Basel Mission Press, 1947, p.6.

New thinking was beginning to emerge in the Missionary periodicals. Initially, there was the observation expressed in the leading periodical the Indian Evangelical Review in 1876 which felt that:

“The love of ecclesiastical dignity among Episcopalians, of legal order among Presbyterians, and of liberty among Congregationalists” were all in themselves commendable. But it would be impossible to find any real ecclesiastical basis upon which these three could be united.¹²

But there were others who began exploring the different types of Union that could be possible. Dr Jacob Chamberlain appealed for the formation of a “Church of Christ in India”.¹³ He thought that as a first step, the different groups within particular denominations such as the Presbyterian groups, the Episcopalian groups and the Methodist groups could come together. But even though such thinking was going on, it was felt that a total organic union of the churches would not be possible.¹⁴

There were other smaller factors that contributed to the church union movement in South India. During the summer, missionaries developed the tradition of going to camp in cooler hill stations in the south such as Kodaikanal and Ootacamund. There it did not matter which church tradition one belonged to. This practical experience of talking and sharing information among each other and getting to know each other helped the missionaries to appreciate each other’s work.¹⁵ These factors must have played a very substantial role in the mission boards recognising the plea of the Indian Christians that the South Indian churches should become one.

These brief insights enable us to see the extraordinary guidance of God in bringing the great church traditions to become one in such a

¹² Ibid., p.24

¹³ Ibid.,p.25

¹⁴ Ibid., p.27

¹⁵ Ibid., p.28

profound manner. We give thanks to God for those amazing visionaries who contributed to move the mission boards to do the unthinkable, to become one, as our Lord Jesus wanted his church to be. I only hope there will be a greater appreciation of the process towards the union and value, treasure and lead the great Church of South India into the future. It is after all, God who made this possible.

A Prayer of Krishna Pillai

Let my heart always think of him
Let my head always bow down to him
Let my lips always sing his praise
Let my hands always worship him
Let my body always serve him with love.
O Lord of grace, immense like a mountain peak full of goodness!
Do thou forgive my sins!
When my spirit leaves my body
Let me behold thy divine face, radiant like the lotus
even on the cross on which thy enemies nailed thee.
And let my heart rejoice in thy sacred name.
Grant thou this boon to me, O Lord!

Henry Alfred Krishna Pillai (1827 -1900) was a Tamil Christian convert. His contribution to Tamil Christian literature is immense. He was a great poet, and he translated John Bunyan's Pilgrims Progress into Tamil. He also wrote Poems which are sung as Lyrics in churches today.

Relevance of Gandhian Alternatives in the Context of Globalisation

Revd Dr Solomon Victus

[This is an extract from the original, with the writer's permission. The full article can be obtained on application to the Editor.]

There was a birth of “Gandhism”, named after Mahatma Gandhi in the post-Independence period of India. This new term has become inevitable for those who are talking about economic alternatives. It has become a popular ideology while referring to principles and paths of alternatives. Although such talk is in decline in recent years in India due to various factors, a new brand of ambassadors is coming up globally who witness that they are still inspired by it in many ways. This evokes a question of how the concept of Gandhism which is ignored in India is able to get attraction at the global level, and is especially able to survive in a context of the neo-liberal market economy and globalisation. What is the significance which Gandhism is still able to witness? We all aware that globalisation is infamous for mercilessly eroding local identities in the name of fashion and trade. Therefore I would like to discuss briefly how the entity of Gandhism is able to bounce back in a neo-liberal globalised context.

Reappraisal of “Gram Swaraj”: *Gram Swaraj* means nothing but village independence or self-rule by local people. It is considered to be one of the alternative social principles to the existing dominant development paradigm. This was developed in 1900 when Gandhi was concentrating on writing Indian Home-rule (*Hind Swaraj*).¹ This

¹ M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1996.

model was based upon the inspirations of Tolstoy Farm in Soviet Russia. This gives an ideological direction applicable to different times, and therefore anyone who is willing to fight against globalisation could make use of this framework and principle even without using Gandhi's name. There are a few groups who react spontaneously to Gandhi's name for various reasons. For the BJP and RSS he was the one who supported minority Muslims more than majority Hindus.² For Dr Ambedkar and some Dalit leaders, Gandhi was a hypocrite because he did not agree to a separate electorate for Dalits and Dalitstan, and he indirectly supported majority caste Hindus.³ For people like J. Nehru and modern economists, the Gandhian principles of economics were impractical, idealistic, backward, naive and too moralistic etc.⁴ For the Leftists they were too feudal and pro-capitalistic.

On the other hand, most institutional Gandhians try to promote certain concepts of Gandhism mixing with the modern production process, and run their institutions under the spell of the BJP views of Ram Rajya in order to get patronage from the government. Institutional Gandhians interpret and discuss issues only related to typical traditional Gandhian themes. They may not dare to challenge some parts of the Gandhian principles and take radical alternatives to the current context. For example, the Gandhian understanding of Bhagavad Gita and Ramayana was entirely different from the BJP's communal views, but today this difference is not seriously taken up by the institutional Gandhians.⁵ Wearing *Khadi* dress alone does not justify Gandhian values. Even Gandhian production centres could not

² Fred Dallmoyr and N.S. Devy (Eds), *Between Tradition and Modernity; India's Search for identity*, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1998, p. 142.

³ B.R. Nanda, *Gandhi and his Ethics*, Bombay: OUP, 1996, p. 77-97.

⁴ C.T. Kurien, *The Economy: An Interpretative Introduction*, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1992, p. 355.

⁵ M.K. Gandhi, *The Bhagavad Gita*, New Delhi: Orient Publishers, 1998 (8th print), p. 15.

go beyond the traditional sense of business ethics. Some of the private “*sarvodaya*” units are nowadays surged into the problem of adulteration of synthetic materials, problem of corruption, power politics, nepotism, etc. Sincere efforts to build alliances with progressive forces in order to build a people-oriented sustainable economic programme and to fight against globalisation and privatisation are slowly eroding in Gandhian circles, particularly in South India. If these approaches were changed radically, there would be more receptivity to Gandhism today. Another set of people, who neither have any *sarvodaya* identity, nor have any connectivity with Gandhian institutions, rather try to find more meaning from the Gandhian economic principles than just moralistic appeals.

Fight against Power of Capitalism: The potentiality of disaster capitalism has been manifested in different forms and seems to be gaining strength day by day. It is able to create more and more competition, profit, wealth, capital, accumulation, shopping malls satisfying all consumers and so on. The common people are attracted by the capitalistic mode of production and consider that it is the “only ultimate deity” given into our system for the human beings to praise and worship. The common people are simply carried away perhaps by the propaganda and are satisfied with modern fantasies of capitalism. The protagonists of capitalism work in such a way as to create the mindset that there is no alternative (“TINA”) against the modern forms of capitalism.

Flaw in State Socialism: An alternative society which was visualized and realised against capitalism ended up in founding a new system of state socialism in a few countries. Although it was a radical position to establish a society based on a new socialist mode of production, the socialism grew its own old framework of the state with centralised planning, autocracy, large scale industrial production, violence, competition in terms of arms and technology and so on. It was like old wine in new bottles. Socialism was literally

imposed on people by the state, yet the whole attempt was praised by many intellectuals who were inspired by new experiences. Thanks to the new situation of state socialism where none starved for food, medicine and employment, however, somehow fear about loss of freedom engulfed people ... A similar situation was experienced to some extent in the Indian subcontinent during the emergency period of Indira Gandhi. Communist regimes in Indian states such as Kerala, West Bengal, Tripura, had similar approaches except with democratically elected representatives and government officials. There cannot be one unique model for socialism for everywhere but many and, however, a genuine socialist order is yet to be realized among us.

The Problem with the Ideology of Indian State: From the very beginning of the Independence Movement, the leaders as well as people were divided on the basis of borrowed ideologies from the West as well as neighbouring countries. The influences of Feudalism, Capitalism and Socialism were shared by all parties. People understood those ideologies in their own ways of selfish interests in practising it. The modern intellectual generation benefited by all the three modes of production ideologies without knowing the seriousness of the difference. Somehow corporate capitalism has come to stay in the Indian soil for a longer period with the help of our political party leaders. The inspiration of the minority elites was and is considered to be the only guiding principle of the state policies. The vast majority of the people who still live under subsistence economy are not considered as the power groups. Under the banner of economic assistance WB, IMF, WTO extended aid to the Indian state and furthermore MNC's, both Indian and non-Indian, were welcomed with red carpet reception. The media and communication system powerfully promoted the market economy at the cost of Indian human resources and new metals. Unfortunately, capitalists, socialists, nationalists, Gandhians, all are hooked up with the

globalisation algorithm. How do we draw an alternative to this dominant mindset? What could be best out of all?

Most Indian political leaders wish to maintain the name of Gandhi for ritualistic and symbolic formalities. Therefore they are keen on wearing *Khadi* dress regularly and visit often the tomb or relics of Gandhi along with foreign guests. Gandhi, according to them, was a person who got political freedom from the British, but he has no meaning to the modern economic malady of the country. The vast majority of the policy makers think that only the neo-liberal market economy can provide good opportunities to the Indian masses. They never recognize that Gandhi in his days dealt basically with economic issues in order to drive away the British Empire from India. Rather the policy makers dream that through globalisation and New EXIM (bilateral export-import) policies, the national GNP and GDP growth are increasing steadily and the country is catching up with the West as well as emerging global super powers. They tend to forget the fact that we are slowly mortgaging our country towards a system of neo-colonialism and serfdom while making India a dumping ground for the waste products and pollutants of the world. Failure of the state to patronise and encourage the Gandhian alternative model gives the message that we are unwilling to take those principles seriously in spite of its attraction to global new lifestyle seekers.

At the same time, many political parties including the BJP under the pretext of developing villages, allowing village resources to be exploited by both foreign and Indian companies. The BJP was sometime more vocal in insisting on swadeshi in earlier days, but later they displayed out and out indulgence in handing over the resources of villages into the hands of the market while paying lip service to Gandhi. In fact they are doing the opposite of what Gandhi and J.C. Kumarappa were trying to achieve in India by privatising people's common resources. Indian villages are slowly turned into either dumping grounds for urban wastes or suppliers of raw

material for the agro-industries and heavy industries. Their productions are determined by the demands of the urban industries. According to J.C. Kumarappa, such people should be branded as political *swadeshies* rather than genuine *swadeshies*.⁶ The political *swadeshies* are the ones who always manipulate the terminology only for their political gains.

Gandhian Pursuit as an Alternative: Let us remember that many of the Third World Countries of 1950s rejected both the dominant models of capitalism as well as state socialism but gathered under the banner of Non-Aligned Nations. The search for a third alternative was inevitable because of inherent drawbacks in those previous dominant systems of development. In my understanding, Gandhian alternative experiments were not purely Gandhi's ideas alone but a collective outcome of troops of his mentors and friends who strived for a third approach in India for many centuries. The Gandhian collective approach introduced certain experiments in India which were so far considered conservative and unproductive. However, certain conceptual frameworks like non-violence, decentralised planning, production for the local needs, local market, minimum ownership, secular spirituality have gained global importance recently. This realisation came into effect only after seeing recent ecological catastrophes and natural disasters. Gandhi was able to utilise the concept of non-violence to the maximum and, through a method of *Satyagraha*, resistance by non-cooperation won freedom from the mighty British Empire. They were more than economic experiments with the above concepts through *Sarvodaya* (welfare of all). Conceptually *Sarvodaya* was a very sound principle but practically an old-fashioned programme. This framework was worked out by a few individuals around Gandhi and J.C. Kumarappa. It was neither emerged out of consensus by the people's

⁶ Solomon Victus, *Religion and Eco Economics of Dr. J.C. Kumarappa: Gandhism Redefined*, New Delhi: ISPCK, 2003, p. 117.

representatives nor born out of state conviction, but it was and is carried out with sympathy and charity of the state. Till today the Gandhian Institution survives at the mercy of the state funding without conviction on the concept.

Indian freedom was and is neither meant for an exclusive privileged minority nor for the sizable majority but for the entire people of the nation. Sometimes it is claimed by the Hindu nationalists that it is meant only for the majority Hindus exclusively. Gandhi himself clarified on this issue and wrote, “It has been said that Indian *swaraj* will be the rule of the majority community, i.e. the Hindus. There could not be a greater mistake than that. If it were to be true, I for one would refuse to call it *swaraj* and would fight it with all the strength at my command, for me *Hind Swaraj* is the rule of all the people, is the rule of justice.”⁷ . . .

Feasibility of the Principle: The Gandhian Model may be outdated as per the standard of the new liberal market economy, yet the principle remains standing high to achieve great economy.⁸ New types of economists, environmentalists, sociologists, educationalists, anthropologists and historians in the world such as Martin Luther King, E.F. Schumacher, Jeremy Rifkin, and Ivan Illich had taken up to develop Gandhian principles as one of the counter tools against the dominant development paradigm.⁹ Anil Agarwal, one who did much pioneering research in the field of Indian environmental issues and thus the Gandhian principle has become more and more relevant today. He wrote, “With every passing day ... Gandhi has become

⁷ *Young India*, 16-04-31, p. 78.

⁸ The concept of Great Economy has been understood by the people who look for alternatives to the corporate-friendly, capitalist, neo-liberal market economy. Kentucky philosopher-farmer Wendell Berry used the best metaphor for capitalist context: ‘the Great Economy’. For him human systems are ‘little economies’ that by necessity depend upon and operate within the Great Economy.

⁹ E.F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful – A Study of Economics as if People Mattered*, New Delhi: Radha Krishna, 1997, p.143.

more and more relevant for me not just as a citizen of India but also as a scientist and engineer”.¹⁰

The heavy inflow of foreign commodities and capital into our country in the name of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has already proved that those who are at the marginal level are pushed to commit suicide. Thousands of small rural peasants, weavers and artisan families are undergoing severe economic and livelihood problems.¹¹ Therefore the time has come for the economic planners to decide to have either a comprehensive employment generating economy or become a suicide-generating nation. We have already experienced enough of the global market economy and its impact on the vast majority of people. We are already fed up with the suicide-generating economy in operation. Enough is enough. Having understood the feeling of the vast majority of Indian people, the political economists need to take up new approaches towards sustainable economy which should address issues such as employment generation, cottage industries, production based on local and renewable material, small irrigation schemes, special privileges to agricultural land, tax on conversion of productive agricultural land to housing and industrial use, fair prices to local food products, fair wages, etc.

Once modern consumers, especially from middle class families, understand the onslaught of globalisation, changes will definitely happen. The target of the global economy itself is on the middle-class group. The health situation and emerging new diseases will not allow us to continue with the present mode of production. One section of the middle class has already started realising the seriousness due to emerging problems with their working hours, monthly salaries,

¹⁰ *Down to Earth*, New Delhi, 15 March 2001, p. 53.

¹¹ *Frontline*, Chennai, April 27, 2001, p. 5.

retirement benefits, provident funds, right to trade union, etc. It is the right time to come together as responsible consumers along with toiling masses, small peasants, artisans and anti-globalisation movements to fight against this common enemy in various ways, boycotting foreign products, exploring alternative local labour-friendly products, supporting the political parties and movements who work against globalisation tooth and nail.

Concluding Thoughts: Many times Indian initiatives and experiments are born with great thinking but because of lack of proper communication they do not reach outside India and get recognition. For instance, principles of Buddhism and Buddhist economy were lost in India locally but gained recognition globally. Gandhism lost it locally but gained in several countries. Great personalities like Martin Luther King, E.F. Schumacher, Ivan Illich, Edward Goldsmith, Jeremy Rifkin, Nelson Mandela, Barak Obama, Mark Lindley, etc., were greatly influenced by Gandhian means of struggle as well as philosophy of ecological principles through the writings of Gandhi and J.C. Kumarappa. They had left with us great pedagogies in their respective fields to achieve a just, equitable, ecological world on this earth. Ecological Economics is one of the best identified solutions offered by the Gandhians to the Indian as well as global nations. The European economists are seriously involved in degrowth economy in accordance with the Gandhi-Kumarappa principles. J.C. Kumarappa is often considered the father of degrowth economics.¹²

Indian activists like Medha Patkar, Ecological academics especially like Vandana Shiva and Anil Gupta, Environmentalists like

¹² Chiara Corazza, "At the Roots of Degrowth: Joseph Cornelius Kumarappa's Economy of Permanence" at Ca' Foscari University, Italy on March 2012.

Ramachandra Guha and Madeve Gadgil, Computer Engineers like Venu Madhav Govind and Depak Molghan, Marxists like M.P. Parameswaran, Medical doctors like Jeevanandam look up to the spirit of Kumarappa and Gandhian principles to work out a new ecological paradigm. They are the people who are seriously critical about the present politics of energy (entropy), development, natural resources and wastage /pollution drawn from the spirit of Gandhism.

Why then were ecological economics not given importance by the Indian state? To be frank it cannot survive in a centralised system: rather it requires decentralised and democratic infrastructures in every sector. This trend may not be helpful to the current world powers to maintain the same lifestyle and desiring to control over the non-renewable resources of other countries. Basically, disaster capitalism needs to be sustained for the sake of the North American as well as European self-interest and lifestyle. This model is imitated blindly by the Southern countries too. Ultimately ecological economics is projected as a dangerous enemy of capitalism, state socialism and globalisation and so on.

Gandhism and Kumarappaism need to be resurrected and revived, especially in the areas of non-polluting renewable energy resources, organic products, simple life system, and recycling models while having critical approaches to casteism, tradition, religious belief, etc. Those seeds of Gandhism and Kumarappaism are not dead once for all like genetically modified seeds: rather they will resurge and be resilient again and again until humanity realises the meaning of an ecological life style. The crux of the entire argument is whether Gandhi is meaningful to cultural issues or social transformation or not, but it is highly irrefutable to the ecological economy discussions today.

Solomon Victus is a retired faculty member of Tamilnadu Theological Seminary, Madurai

The Church of South India

An Ecumenical Vision and Its Continuing Challenge

A Personal Reflection

Revd Dr Samuel Reddimalla, USA

I was born before the inauguration of the Church of South India (CSI) in 1947 and was raised in the former British Methodist region of Karimnagar District. My education took me from Jagtial to Kothapally, Kamareddy, Secunderabad, and finally to the United Theological College (UTC), Bangalore.



In 1971, I entered the ordained ministry in the Diocese of Medak. After serving the Diocese in various pastoral and ministerial capacities until 1986, I moved to the United States to pursue advanced studies in theology and mission. Following the completion of my master's and doctoral studies, I resumed ordained ministry in the Diocese of Lexington, Kentucky, in 1992.

For more than five decades, my ministry has allowed me to serve the Church in both India and the United States. In the Church of South India, I served as Presbyter-in-Charge. In The Episcopal Church in the United States, I served as Assistant Priest, Rector, Vicar, and Priest-in-Charge in the Dioceses of Lexington, West Virginia, and New York.

This journey has given me the unusual privilege of experiencing Christian ministry from both sides of the CSI's ecumenical heritage: first within the united Church that emerged in South India, and later within one of the historic Christian traditions represented in that union.

My reflections, therefore, arise not merely from an interest in the history of the CSI, but from a lifetime of ministry within its ecumenical tradition and from my experience of that tradition in a different cultural and ecclesiastical setting.

It is from this perspective that I wish to reflect on the Church of South India—its remarkable beginnings, its ecumenical identity, its growth, and, especially, the challenge of preserving its original vision of Christian unity in the present day.

The Historic Formation of the Church of South India

The formation of the Church of South India remains one of the most significant milestones in the history of modern ecumenism. The CSI was inaugurated on September 27, 1947, only weeks after India gained Independence. Its creation demonstrated that churches with episcopal and non-episcopal traditions could overcome longstanding denominational differences and become one united church.

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, various Western missionary societies worked throughout South India. Their ministries contributed greatly to evangelism, education, healthcare, and social development. At the same time, however, they brought with them the denominational divisions of Western Christianity. Among these traditions were Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists, represented through organisations such as the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon, the British Methodist Church, the London Missionary Society, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, and the Church of Scotland.

Consequently, Christians who confessed the same Lord Jesus Christ often found themselves separated by denominational structures inherited from Western missionary movements.

The Call to Unity

An important step toward unity came at Tranquebar (Tharangambadi) in 1919, when Indian Christian leaders issued a call for greater visible unity among the churches.

Among the prominent figures associated with the movement for church unity was Bishop V.S. Azariah of Dornakal, the first Indian Anglican

diocesan bishop. Leaders of that generation recognized that inherited denominational divisions weakened the Christian witness in India.

The prayer of Jesus, “that they may all be one” (John 17:21), was not regarded merely as an ideal. It became a call to visible Christian unity.

Negotiations toward union continued for nearly three decades. One of the most difficult questions concerned church government and ordained ministry. Anglican churches emphasized the historic episcopate, while Presbyterian and Congregational traditions had developed different forms of church governance.

Eventually, a remarkable compromise was achieved. Existing ordained ministries were mutually recognized, while the united church adopted the episcopate for its future ministry.

The Inauguration of the CSI

On September 27 1947 the Church of South India was formally inaugurated at St George’s Cathedral in Madras, now Chennai.

- The South India United Church, itself formed through an earlier union of Presbyterian and Congregational traditions;
- The southern dioceses of the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon;
- The Methodist Church of South India.(British and Australian)

This was far more than an administrative merger. Churches with different histories, liturgies, theological emphases, and systems of governance agreed to surrender a measure of denominational identity for the sake of a greater Christian unity.

That courageous decision gave the CSI a distinctive place in world Christianity.

Growth and Ministry

From its beginnings, the Church of South India grew into one of India’s largest Protestant church bodies. Its dioceses extend across South India and include diverse linguistic, cultural, and social communities.

The CSI developed a democratic-episcopal form of governance in which bishops, clergy, and lay people participate in the life and administration of the Church. The Synod serves as its highest governing body, while individual dioceses are led by bishops together with diocesan councils. At the parish level, presbyters work alongside elected lay leadership.

The contribution of the CSI extends far beyond parish ministry.

Through schools, colleges, hospitals, clinics, rural ministries, and social-service institutions, the church has contributed significantly to Indian society. Institutions associated with the Christian missionary and CSI heritage have played important roles in education, healthcare, women's advancement, and service to marginalized communities.

The Church has also advocated for Dalit and tribal communities and has supported programs addressing poverty, education, vocational development, and social justice.

More recently, the CSI has given increased attention to environmental stewardship and eco-theology, reminding Christians that care for God's creation is part of faithful discipleship.

The CSI and the Worldwide Ecumenical Movement

The importance of the CSI extends beyond India.

Its formation demonstrated that historic denominational divisions need not remain permanent. The CSI became an important model for subsequent united churches, including the Church of North India, the Church of Pakistan, and the Church of Bangladesh.

The CSI also participates in major international Christian bodies and maintains relationships with Anglican, Methodist, Reformed, and other ecumenical traditions.

Its very existence proclaims an important theological truth: Christians can preserve valuable elements of their traditions while recognizing that their deepest identity is found in Jesus Christ rather than in denominational labels.

The CSI Diaspora: A Question Worth Considering

The migration of South Indian Christians to North America, Europe, the Middle East, Australia, New Zealand, and other parts of the world has created a new challenge for the CSI's ecumenical identity.

Understandably, Christians living far from India desire to preserve their languages, liturgies, music, customs, and fellowship. There is nothing inherently wrong with maintaining these cultural and linguistic traditions. They can provide immigrants and subsequent generations with a valuable connection to their spiritual and cultural heritage.

What does it mean to establish a separate CSI ecclesiastical identity outside the geographical context for which the Church of South India was originally created?

The CSI was born by bringing Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, Congregational, and other Christian traditions together. Therefore, when CSI Christians migrate to countries where these same historic church traditions already exist, should the first instinct be to establish parallel CSI structures? Or should the ecumenical heritage of the CSI encourage its members to seek fellowship and partnership with the local churches from which the CSI itself historically emerged?

For example, in the United States there are Episcopal, Methodist, Presbyterian, United Church of Christ, and other churches whose traditions contributed to the heritage represented within the CSI.

Could CSI Christians living abroad form Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada, or other linguistic congregations within these existing denominations while maintaining their cultural and liturgical heritage?

Such an approach could preserve language and culture while simultaneously honouring the ecumenical vision that gave birth to the CSI.

A Concern About Parallel Ecclesiastical Structures

It is therefore a matter of concern when bishops from India are invited into other countries to perform episcopal functions such as confirmations without sufficient relationship with the bishops or denominational authorities already exercising ministry within those geographical jurisdictions.

The question is not whether diaspora Christians should preserve their CSI heritage. They certainly should.

The deeper question is whether that heritage is best preserved by reproducing separate denominational structures abroad or by embodying the very ecumenical principle upon which the CSI was founded.

If the CSI's historic witness is summarized by Christ's prayer "that they may all be one", then its diaspora communities have a remarkable opportunity to demonstrate what that unity can look like in a new cultural setting.

Instead of becoming another denomination alongside Anglican, Episcopal, Methodist, Presbyterian, Reformed, and Congregational churches, the CSI diaspora could become a bridge among them.

Recovering the Original Vision

The founders of the Church of South India did something extraordinarily courageous. They surrendered cherished denominational distinctions in order to create something larger than any one tradition.

Are we preserving the institution of the CSI, or are we preserving the vision that created the CSI?

The two are not necessarily the same.

Preserving Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, or other linguistic and cultural traditions is valuable. But culture should serve Christian fellowship rather than create new ecclesiastical boundaries.

Perhaps the greatest contribution that CSI Christians living abroad can make is not simply to reproduce the CSI institution in another country, but to carry its ecumenical DNA into the churches and communities where God has placed them.

Present-Day Challenges

Like every major church body, the CSI faces significant challenges. Administrative disputes, questions surrounding property and institutional governance, diocesan elections, changing worship preferences, and the broader socio-political environment in India all require wisdom and responsible leadership.

Younger generations also encounter a rapidly changing Christian landscape. Traditional liturgical worship now exists alongside contemporary and Pentecostal expressions of faith. The Church must discern how to remain rooted in its theological and ecumenical heritage while communicating the Gospel faithfully to new generations.

These challenges should not cause the CSI to abandon its founding identity. Rather, they should call the church back to it.

Conclusion: “That They May All Be One”

The Church of South India remains a living testimony to the possibility of Christian unity.

Its founders demonstrated that inherited divisions could be overcome when Christians were willing to place the unity of the Body of Christ above denominational loyalty.

More than seventy-five years later, the question before the CSI may not simply be how to preserve what was created in 1947. The greater question is how to continue living the vision that made 1947 possible.

“That they may all be one ... so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” — John 17:21

The future faithfulness of the Church of South India may depend upon how courageously we continue to live that prayer.

South Asia Christian Youth Network (SACYN), Nepal, August 2026 - A Reflection

Revd Vinod Victor

It was a privilege and a joy to be part of SACYN 2026 - a movement whose journey has been closely intertwined with my own ecumenical pilgrimage for more than twenty-five years. The seeds were sown during the “Everywhere to Everywhere” encounter in 2000, when conversations began about creating a space where young Christians across South Asia could meet, listen to one another, build friendships across borders and discover together what Christian witness could mean in our region. Those conversations eventually led to the first gathering of South Asian Christian young people in 2002 in Colombo and to the emergence of SACYN — the South Asia Christian Youth Network. The South Asian Churches joined CMS, USPG and other ecumenical partners in facilitating this movement.

What followed has been an extraordinary journey. Across countries, churches, cultures and generations, SACYN has identified, connected and nurtured dynamic young leaders. Many who entered the network as young participants went on to assume significant responsibilities in churches, ecumenical organisations and the wider society. Each generation brought its own questions and challenges, yet the commitment to ecumenism, justice, peace, friendship and transformative Christian witness continued to hold us together.

To be part of SACYN 2026 in Dhulikel, Nepal, therefore, was much more than attending another gathering. It was to see seeds planted more than two decades ago continuing to grow, bearing fruit in a new generation of leadership.

As we look towards the proposed SACYN Silver Jubilee celebrations next year, I hope it will become a homecoming of the SACYN family across generations – an opportunity to reconnect, recommit and

rejoice together; to remember with gratitude, celebrate the friendships and journeys that have shaped us, and renew our commitment to the vision that first brought us together.

Twenty-five years later, the journey continues, the friendships endure, the vision remains alive, and a new generation is carrying the torch forward. Bishop Andi Shie and Canon Andrew Khoo joined us this time as witnesses to the amazing work the young people do. There is indeed much to remember, much to celebrate and much still to dream together. Adrian and Leslie, we remembered you among many others.

Revd Vinod Victor is an ordained presbyter of the Church of South India currently serving as Anglican Chaplain in Freiburg, Germany

The South Asia Forum, Wantage, April-May 2026

Revd Adrian Watkins, FCI Secretary

The South Asia Forum held its annual gathering from 27th April to 1st May 2026 at St Mary's Convent, Wantage with the Diocese of Oxford as the host. The Forum brings together leaders of the CSI, CNI, Church of Pakistan and Church of Bangladesh with their European partners and links. The theme and focus this year was *"Celebrating Rural Ministry and Mission"*. The keynote address was given by Sarah Hulme, the Rural Mission and Ministry Officer in the Connexional Team of the British Methodist Church. She highlighted several challenges faced by local communities in the UK including affordable housing, transport and communication connectivity, access to public services, isolation and loneliness and energy issues in relation to net-zero. She then also spoke of particular concerns faced by rural churches including smaller, ageing congregations, governance issues, maintaining buildings, scarcity of funds, and an over-stretched ordained ministry.

The Moderator of the Church of South India, Most Revd Mark Reuben, and the Moderator of the Church of Bangladesh, the Most Revd Samuel Sunil Mankhin, were present at the Forum and gave presentations on the theme from their contexts. Revd Dr Ajith Kumar, General Secretary gave a presentation for the Church of North India over Zoom (an urgent meeting prevented him from joining in person) as did Revd Shahzad Gill of the Church of Pakistan whose visa did not come through to enable him to travel.

The gathering also included an exposure visit to a small town and village parishes to understand the local context in these areas and the range of ministry that is possible in a rural area – this included an excellent Church primary school and a pioneering "allotment" church to enable more people to connect with the church and to hear the

good news. Bishop Mary Gregory also lead a very meaningful guided quiet afternoon for the participants.

As well as the South Asia church leaders mentioned there were also participants representing the Diocese of Oxford link with CSI Nandyal diocese; the Methodist Church; USPG; CMS; the United Reformed Church; Kerk-in-Actie (Protestant Church of the Netherlands); the Derbyshire-CNI ecumenical partnership; Lambeth Palace; the Lambeth Palace Anglican Communion Fund; the Anglican Communion; the Cambridgeshire Churches; CSI Vellore ecumenical link; the Diocese of Guildford; Church of Pakistan Sialkot link; the Methodist Devon and South West England; CNI Cuttack Diocese link; and of course also the Friends of the Church in India. Unusually, it so happened that four members of the FCI committee were present, each representing a different one of the aforementioned agencies - Sheila Norris, Margaret Marshall, Fiona Brampton and Adrian Watkins. Several other partners who are part of the South Asia Forum could not attend for various reasons this year and sent their apologies. Overall, it was a meaningful and informative time of fellowship and learning for all as well as an opportunity for church leaders from the South Asia united churches to connect with each other.

Colonialism and Christian Missions in India

1793-1947

Dr Eleanor Jackson

There is much that could be written on this subject, and indeed already has been. “Colonialism” is generally taken to include attitudes, policy and settlement, usually taken by force. Sadly, the argument that, from the arrival of Protestant missionaries in areas today known as Bengal and Tamil Nadu until Independence in 1947, missions were agents of imperialism is re-cycled continuously and is now resurfacing in book reviews and their subjects. It is to oversimplify the dominance of English culture, with the late Bishop Sundar Clarke’s little book, *Let the Indian Church be Indian!* resonating even when published (CLS) in 1979. It may be convenient shorthand, but it flies in the face of historical facts. Even after the East India Company received a renewed charter in 1833 requiring it to admit missionaries to British controlled territories, missionaries were obstructed. Probably because the Anglican bishops were part of the colonial establishment from 1813, Bishop Daniel Corrie (1777-1837) was strongly critical of both the Company and the social conditions it tolerated, while most British Protestant missionaries and foreign nationals “kept out of politics”.¹ The paradox is illustrated by the magisterial statue of the first Bishop of the Madras Presidency in St George’s Cathedral, Chennai. The Brahmin boy looking adoringly at Corrie is poetic licence, illustrating the superiority, it was thought, of Western education and Christian philosophy. High caste parents in Kolkata agreed. Alexander Duff was

¹ The CMS archives in the University of Birmingham are full of letters warning their missionaries. They employed a German in the 1820s, Deocard Schmidt, who got into trouble. See *Red Tape and the Gospel* for the case of R. Keithahn, an American missionary in Madurai District who got himself expelled twice by the British and once by the Indian government. He died in his ashram in Kodaikanal after I left India.

directed by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland to start rural primary schools as the London Missionary Society had done 15 or so years earlier, but in 1830 he was lobbied so much by Bengali parents wanting their sons to get Company employment that he started an English medium college, the General Assembly's Institution, and then, when he lost everything after the Disruption in 1843, he founded Duff College. Eventually they were amalgamated as Scottish Churches College and flourish today.² These examples raise the question, who was exploiting whom?

So what is a colonialist history and where do Christian missions fit in? It is a truism that history is written by the victors, as Julius Caesar's *Gallic Wars*, Winston Churchill's *History of the English-speaking Peoples* and autobiographies too numerous to mention show. St Bede and the early mediaeval chroniclers would say the aim of their works was to show how inspiring the growth of the Church was. In the same way, M.E. Gibbs wrote a volume for the Senate of Serampore church history series, *From Jerusalem to New Delhi*.³ Those who argue about colonialist writing and its racist undertones would not be able to do so without a revolution sparked by Miss Gibbs' nephew, Peter Laslett. He broadcast a radio series of lectures for the newborn Open University and published as *The World We have lost*.⁴ It was "bottom up" responses of ordinary people in

² Papers in the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh: W. Paton, *Alexander Duff, Pioneer of Missionary Education* (SCM Press, 1923); M.A. Laird, *Missionaries and Education in Bengal 1793-1839* (Clarendon Press, 1972).

³ This was a text book for the Senate of Serampore College BD degree church history course showing how the Gospel spread after Pentecost until it came to India and flowered with the WCC Third World Assembly. It was intended for WCC and IMC delegates. I used it, but to emphasise the changes as Aramaic culture gave way to Greek, Roman and the post-Reformation languages, with consequent changes in theology. Copies of my lectures are available.

⁴ Peter Laslett's emphasis on how ordinary people lived through history is being taken up now by Mary Beard and other historians contributing to BBC4's *Ancient Rome* series. His brother Robert inherited Ms Gibbs' papers which I suggested

turbulent times. This ought to be the method for understanding missions in India. There is abundant evidence that the Gospel spread fastest and thriving Indian churches sprang up when Indian leaders, often lay people, took the initiative, and their work was self-financing. Henry Venn, the mid-19th century CMS India Secretary, is usually credited with popularising the slogan, *self-propagating, self-financing, self-governing* but it can be traced back to the Baptist Serampore Trio and to missions in China. In India the unstable economic situation exacerbated by adverse weather conditions meant these ideals were rarely met, at least as far as finance was concerned. Andrew Wingate's ground-breaking study on caste and conversion shows what happens in post-Independence times.⁵

William Carey (1763 -1834) addressed the problem in his *Enquiry into reasons why means should not be found* described the situation where traders would go over land and sea and endure hardship to bring back a few beaver pelts but would not seek the inestimable riches of the Kingdom of God overseas, and he outlined the means as what became the Baptist Missionary Society. William Temple (d. 1944), while Rector of St James Church, Piccadilly, argued to student audiences at the Student Volunteer Movement Union Quadrennial conferences that colonial capitalism had done such damage that Christ should be preached there, and mitigating social service provided. The Watchword which propelled at least the pre-WW1 generation of the Student Volunteer Movement sounded imperialist: "The Evangelisation of the World in this Generation". Indian YMCA leaders and others strongly objected Lesslie Newbigin was one of the last to volunteer. He sailed under the aegis of the Church of Scotland in 1936. His SVMU predecessor as District Missionary in Kanchipuram

should go to join the CMS papers in Birmingham University's Special Collections Other important papers are in Bishop's College Kolkata.

⁵ Andrew Wingate, *Caste and Conversion* (ISPCK, 1999) is a shortened version of his PhD thesis, University of Birmingham.

allegedly never allowed an Indian to sit in his presence in his bungalow. The European lifestyle on much higher salaries was another divisive issue even though so much lower than secular positions. Newbigin caused consternation in the SIUC administration *by demanding the same salary as his Indian friend and colleague*.⁶

While the problem was structural, being both establishment and custom, attitudes needed to change. The one speech which has gone down in history expectedly was from Vedanagayam Samuel Azariah, co-founder of the Indian Missionary Society and then the National Missionary Society, consecrated Bishop of Dornakal in 1912. He addressed Commission IV:

The exceeding riches of the glory of Christ can be fully realised ... by all working together worshipping together and learning together the perfect image of our Lord and Christ. It is only with all the Saints that that we can comprehend the love of Christ which passeth knowledge that we may be filled with all the fullness of God. This will be possible only through spiritual friendship between the two races. We ought to be *willing to learn from one another, and to help one another*.

Through all the ages to come the Indian Church will rise up in gratitude to attest the heroism and self-denying labours of the missionaries You have given your goods to feed the poor. You have given your bodies to be burnt We also ask for love. Give us
FRIENDS

Friendship with genuine equality and love has to be the basis of mission. It will not tolerate racism of any kind. Paternalism is the

⁶ On the importance of Indian leadership see E.M Jackson, "From Krishna Pal to Lal Behari Dey: Indian Builders of the Church in Bengal 1800-1891", in D. Roberts (ed), *Converting Colonialism: Visions and Realities in Mission History 1706-1914* (Wm Eerdmans, 2008).

other side of the coin as a mental colonialism. The Friends of the Churches In India must play their part, however small, remembering that Jesus told his disciples they were not his servants but his friends because he had told them what he was doing.

Bibliography:

Billington Harper, Susan, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma: Bishop V.S. Azariah and the Travails of Christianity in British India* (W. Eerdmans, 2000).

Gibbs, M.E., *The Anglican Church in India 1600-1970* (ISPK, 1972).

Hollis, A., *Paternalism and the Church* (OUP, 1954).

Jackson, E.M., "And the Truth shall make you free", in Laing, M.T.B. and Paul Weston (Eds), *Theology in Missionary Perspective: Lesslie Newbigin's Legacy* (Pickwick Press, Oregon, 2012).

Jackson, E.M., *Red Tape and the Gospel: The Ecumenical Mission Struggle of William Paton 1886 -1943* (Birmingham, 1980).

Newbigin, J.E.L., *Unfinished Agenda*, 2nd ed. (St Andrew Press, Edinburgh, 1993).

Stanley, Brian, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910* (Eerdmans, 2009).

Eleanor Jackson served in Tamilnadu Theological Seminary Madurai, 1979-82, and Serampore College, Kolkata 1983-1986. She is currently endeavouring to finish a biography of Bishop Lesslie Newbigin while being ward councillor on Bath and North East Somerset Council (2007-).

News from the Church of Bangladesh

Rev. Stella Sudatta Boidya

Matthew S. Bicket

Reverend Stella Sudatta Boidya passed away on October 26 at 5.30 am in the Bollovpur Mission Old Age Home in Meherpur. She was 82 years old. She was the first female priest of the Church of Bangladesh.

Her funeral service was held on October 27 at 10:00 am at Epiphany Church, Barishal, officiated by Father John. The burial service followed at 11:00 am, conducted by Bishop Sourabh Pholia. A large number of people attended to pay their last respects.

Rev. Boidya was born in 1942 in Dhamsor village, Barishal. As a pioneering female priest, she faithfully served in various parishes of the Church of Bangladesh for many years. In the later years of her life, she ministered as the priest of the Oxford Mission Epiphany Church, Barishal.

She studied theology at St Andrew's Theological College, Dhaka and was ordained as a deacon at Christ the King Church, Khalishpur, Khulna, in 1996. The following year, in 1997, Rev. Sudatta Boidya and Rev. Manorama Mitra were ordained as priests at St Thomas Cathedral, Dhaka, they are the first female priests of the Church of Bangladesh.

Before her ordination, she taught at Oxford Mission High School and later served as the warden of homes in Bollovepur, Kaligram, and Khalishpur under the Child Care Department of the Church of Bangladesh. She cared for the children and girls there with great compassion and maternal love, becoming like a mother to many.

In 1979, following her return from a year as a Bursar of the Church of Scotland at St Colm's College in Edinburgh, in collaboration with Matthew Bicket she was instrumental in the establishing of the Kishore Kirshori Sangho, based on the principles of the Boys' and Girls' Brigade, throughout the Church of Bangladesh to supplement the work of the Sunday School Committee, and it is still operating today.

At the time of her death, she left behind countless beloved students, former residents, colleagues, relatives, and devoted members of the congregation who deeply admired her life of service and faith. It is also worth noting that Rev. Sudatta Boidya lived a life wholly dedicated to her calling and ministry.



***Rev. Boidya and Rev. Matthew Bicket
in 2019***

The Christian Mission Hospital in Rajshahi celebrates its 100th anniversary on November 28th 2026. At this milestone, they want to remember and honour all the past missionaries whose dedication built the hospital into what it is today. Rev Matthew Bicket, a member of the Management

Committee has been invited to attend, although his main links with the hospital in the 1970s, was six monthly visits for a Cholera vaccination! Please remember all the staff at the hospital and the students at the nursing school in your prayers.

Friends of the Church in India

Registered Charity No: 1042850

The Pink House, Church Road, Coddendam, Suffolk IP6 9PY

Website: www.f-c-i.org

Patron: The Rt Revd Alastair Cutting

Chair	Ms Sheila Norris
Vice-Chair	Revd Matthew Bicket
Secretary	Revd Adrian Watkins (01449 541972)
Treasurer	Mr Selvan Enoch
Membership/ Database Secretary	Revd William Allberry (0788 641576)

All can be contacted at mail@f-c-i.org.uk

Membership Subscriptions 2027

Individual £25; Couple £35; Corporate £50

Notes:

1. Unless paid by standing order, subscriptions are due in January each year. Cheques payable to Friends of the Church in India should be sent to the Membership Secretary, Revd William Allberry, 48 Ditton Road, Surbiton, Surrey KT6 6RB. Tel: 07818641576. Email: membership.fci@gmail.com.
2. FCI is a Registered Charity. Standing order forms and Gift Aid forms are available from the Membership Secretary or on our website.
3. Corporate Membership is open to Church Organisations and others.
4. Data Protection Act 1998. The following information about members is held on the database: title, name, address, telephone number, email ID, and last year of subscription paid. Objections to storage of any information should be intimated to the Database Secretary.
5. Webmaster: Mr Selvan Enoch. Email: webmaster.fci@gmail.com
6. Editor: Mr. Sumanth Bommarthi. Email: editor.fci@gmail.com

Opinions expressed in the pages of PILGRIM are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of FCI or the Editor.