

Review

Sharing your Faith with a Buddhist

Madasamy Thirumalai

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For many of us, Buddhism is a one common religion predominantly in South Asia and South East Asian regions. This book is an eye opener to learn how Buddhism is multifaceted in its theology, practice and understanding God according to regions, folk beliefs, socio, political and economic influences of Buddhism practiced nation-states of South Asia and South East Asia.

Madasamy Thirumalai keeps the reader aware of many forms of Buddhism and interestingly the folk religious part of Buddhism. He also relates integration between Buddhism and Hinduism from his own experience as a high school student who grew up in Southern India. All through this book, we can sense an anthropological tone of learning some cultural and life styles of countries like Sri Lanka, Myanmar(Burma), Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Tibet, Bhutan, Mongolia, Korea and Japan. This book clarifies the distinction between the main line divisions of Buddhism called Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana.

In the introduction to this book, Thirumalai shares his passion by these words, “ My prayer is that our Buddhist friends will come to know God as their Father, worship Jesus as their Lord and Savior, and be led by the Holy Spirit to come to the true faith, giving up their image worship and other similar practices. The name of Jesus is alive. Thousands like me are hearing of Him.”

It is worthy to mention that the writer is theologically handling the Biblical passages, and position them appropriately all through this book. This is obvious in one of his chapters on dissimilarities between Buddhism and Christianity and the other chapter on evangelizing Buddhists. Chapters ten to fourteen keeps the reader with tons of information on territorial spirituality, territorial gods, magic, spirit possession and the influence of animistic, pantheistic, polytheistic Buddhism. This gives an opposing view to the Buddhism, which is being spread in the west, by the Buddhist missionaries.

Both these books are scholarly in every way. However, it differs from many scholarly writings on Hinduism and Buddhism. Remember! These books are not another book on reading about other religions and its philosophies. It is all about evangelism and a resource of knowing Hinduism and Buddhism with the heart of missions in reaching out to our Hindu /Buddhist friends with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. These books are exclusively different from some secular and sacred publications, which compromises the

Gospel in the name of interfaith readings and interfaith dialogues. These books could be used as evangelism and out reach mission tool.

Though the author is an academician, his ability in writing to an ordinary reader is highly commendable. It is evident that he has intentionally avoided many theological, philosophical and professional jargons all through this book.

These books balance the expectation of an academic learner and also an ordinary reader. As a professional mission developer, mission consultant and a missionary from South Asia to North America, I highly recommend this book to every colleague of mine in parishes, in seminaries and in the mission plantings to buy, read and reflect this in your own communities where many Hindus and Buddhists migrating everyday in our neighborhoods.

Unlike many contemporary publications in missiology, both books maintain the balance and clarity of Trinitarian theology and doctrinal position of the Christian Church.