



Origin and Development of Pentecostalism in India with Special reference to the Indian Pentecostal Church (IPC): An expression of Indigenous Spirituality

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Abstract

Christianity in India has a tradition dating more than 2000 years. It came to India with the arrival of one of the disciples of Jesus Christ, St. Thomas in AD 52. Christianity witnessed many renewal movements throughout history. Pentecostalism is an important and significant renewal movement. It has nearly a hundred year tradition. It is generally believed that Pentecostalism came to India through Western missionaries but further investigation and records reveal that the Pentecostal experience or an incipient form of Pentecostalism can be traced in India before it originated other parts of the world. This does not mean that the arrival of Western Pentecostalism had no impact in India. In fact a structured and organized Pentecostal church began in India with the arrival of Pentecostals from the West. Thus all Pentecostal churches are not indigenous origin yet all indigenous churches are not Pentecostal. Assemblies of God (AG) and Church of God (COG) have no Indian origin. After independence they become indigenous in leadership. However the Indian Pentecostal Church of God (IPC) is an indigenous Pentecostal church. The distinctive indigenous practices make IPC unique among the Western origin Pentecostal churches and sets it apart from Indian Pentecostalism in general.

Keywords: Christianity, Pentecostalism, Indian Pentecostal Church (IPC), Jesus Christ

1. Introduction

Pentecostalism is a renewal movement within protestant Christianity. It is a form of Christianity that emphasises the work of the Holy Spirit ^[1] and the direct experience of the presence of God by the believer. It is arguably the most important mass religious movement of the twentieth century. Pentecostalism is not a church in itself, but a movement that includes many different churches. Stanley Burgess says, that Indian Pentecostalism is the fifth largest sector of Global Charismatic Christianity. ^[2] Most of the Pentecostal denominations came to India through western missionaries. The Assemblies of God (AG) and Church of God (COG) are the two main western denominations that came to India first. Those denominations are westernized in their doctrine and practice. Indian Pentecostal Church of God (IPC) is Indian in origin. Indian Pentecostal Church (IPC) is distinctive from other Pentecostal churches which has western origin, it follow indigenous practises as opposed to other Pentecostal Churches. Today IPC is known as the largest indigenous Pentecostal church in India.

2. What is Pentecostalism?

Pentecostalism is a fairly modern movement within Christianity that can be traced back to the Holiness movement in the Methodist church. ^[3] A major focus of Pentecostal churches is Holy Spirit baptism as evidenced by the speaking in different tongues. There are approximately 170 different denominations that identify themselves as Pentecostals. "The modern Pentecostal movement is thought by many to have originated at the famous Azusa Street revival (1906-1908) in Los Angeles." ^[4] The New International Dictionary says,

The Pentecostals are modern Christians, who believe that they can have same experience, which the apostolic church had at Pentecost and so are called "Pentecostal". The term "Pentecostal" therefore signifies the experience and not a label for a denomination. It also refers to a person who claims to have the same experience. The new international dictionary of the Christian church says that Pentecostal churches typically "emphasises Spirit baptism as an experience different from conversion and its evidence by speaking in tongues (Acts 2:1-13). They also

¹ For the majority of Christian denominations, the Holy Spirit is the third person (hypostasis) of the Trinity: the Triune God manifested as God the Father, God the Son, and the God the Holy Spirit; each person itself being God

² Stanley M Burgess, ed. *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 284-302.

³ Vinson Synan, *the Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movement in the Twentieth Century* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), 106

⁴ Roger E. Hedlund, *Indian Christianity an Alternate Reading* (Delhi: Clark Theological College & Christian World Imprints, 2016), 115

teach the inspiration of the Bible, salvation by conversion and revival, instantaneous sanctification, divine healing and claim to be a restoration of original Christianity.^[5]

The Pentecostal churches give much emphasis on Spirit baptism and the work of the Holy Spirit. The New International Dictionary says, "It has appeared in many forms, but with one common basic element, a belief in the supernatural of New Testament days, with special emphasis on the "glossolalia^[6]" or the speaking in "tongues" as an evidence of individual's having received a personal experience of Baptism in the Holy Spirit"^[7]

It is clear that the word Pentecostal signifies a large section of the Christian community that emphasizes repentance, individual experience of grace, spiritual new birth, miracles, intense prayer, spiritual revivals, public witnessing, evangelism, fasting, prophecy, dreams, visions, enthusiastic worship, tithing, fervent speaking and praying in tongues, faith healing and faith ministry. It refers to the day of Pentecost-like outpouring of the Holy Spirit on believers.

3. The beginning of Modern Pentecostal Movement

The Pentecostal movement that began at the turn of the 20th century may be described as the greatest missionary awakening in the history of Christianity. "The Pentecostal explosion of the 20th century was not an isolated event but it started as a small ripple and gathered momentum"^[8] According to Klaude Kendrick, the story of the movement must begin with Charles Fox Parham, for he was the first leader of the revival and held a prominent position until his death in 1929. He can rightly be called "the father of the Modern Pentecostal movement", though no such distinction has been given to him. J. R Goff says he "deserves recognition as founder of the movement."^[9]

Unlike revival movements of other days, the appeal of the Movement, in its beginning, was not to the unconverted, but to earnest Christians - believers in Christ who had already received a crisis experience called the new birth. To 'these persons there came a hunger for spiritual reality which caused them to seek earnestly for a new experience' which they envisioned as available to them according to the New Testament pattern. So the Pentecostal movement originated within Christianity as a reform movement giving importance to the Holy Spirit.

3.1 The Modern Pentecostal Movements

The modern Pentecostal movement, began in Topeka, Kansas (USA), in 1901, under the leadership of Charles Fox Parham, a former Methodist and a Holiness preacher. In the 'year ending (night) service' on 31st December, 1900(or on the first

day of the 20th Century) one of the students of Parham's Bethel Bible School, namely Agnes Ozman, was baptized in the Spirit and spoke in other tongues.^[10] V.V Thomas mentioned,

Home in Topeka, for lodging and faith training for individuals seeking a divine cure. In 1900, he opened an informal Bible school for Christian workers where about 40 students registered for the first batch. Miss. Agness N. Ozmen, one of the Bible School students, occupies a unique place in the modern Pentecostal movement.^[11]

It amazed both the teacher (Parham) and the students of the Bible School because only two weeks back, the students arrived at a conclusion in a research work that Glossolalia was the visible sign of the Holy Spirit Baptism. As such they received the experience with an open heart. Within few days Parham and almost all the students in his Bible School also received the Holy Spirit Baptism, with glossolalia. On the basis of this experience and also as per evidences from the Bible, Parham formulated the 'initial evidence theory' by which he taught that speaking in tongue was the 'only physical evidence' or 'sign of the Holy Spirit Baptism.'

But this movement got a momentum with the Azusa Street Revival. Azusa street revival began with William Seymour a black who attended Parham's classes and lead the Azusa Street revival in Los-Angeles.^[12] William J. Seymour, an ex-student of Parham became the centre of a great Pentecostal Revival and it soon pushed the movement to different countries of the World. This revival occurred in April 1906 in Azusa Street in Los Angeles with outpouring of the Holy Spirit.^[13]

The meeting of April 9, 1906 attracted many people. A report that says:

They shouted three days and three nights.... just as they came in". Things began to happen- large crowds came- They needed more space. An old frame building, an old stable converted into a church, situated in the centre of the L.A. City at 312 Azusa Street was rented. It was formerly a Methodist Church, which had fallen into disuse and was in a poor state of repair. Some worthless construction materials had been stored in it. The new Pentecostal believers cleared space for a humble sanctuary and equipped it with crude furniture. This place became famous in Pentecostal circles as the "Azusa Mission."^[14]

Pentecostal fire that was lit in the Azusa Street began to spread to other parts of the world by members who experienced the Pentecostal revival and formed Pentecostal churches. Today Pentecostalism is one of the fastest growing movement in the world.

3.2 The Growth of Pentecostal Movement

Pentecostal and Charismatic movements have many different forms and sizes all over the world. But we can't use their

⁵ J.D Douglas(Ed.), *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 763

⁶ The phenomenon of speaking in an unknown language, especially in religious worship. It is practised especially by Pentecostal and charismatic Christians

⁷ Klaude Kendrick, *The Purpose Fulfilled: A History of the Modern Pentecostal Movement* (Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1961), 111

⁸ Peter S C Pothan, *Pentecostal Movement...*,45

⁹ Kendrick, *The Purpose Fulfilled: A History of the Modern Pentecostal Movement* 111

¹⁰ Pothan, *Pentecostal Movement*, 45

¹¹ V.V Thomas, *Dalit and Tribal Christian of India: Issues and Challenges* (Kerala, Focus India Trust, 2014), 306.

¹² Pothan, *Pentecostal Movement*, 45.

¹³ Thomas, *Dalit and Tribal Christian of India*, 306

¹⁴ Pothan, *Pentecostal Movement...*, 47

figures without accepting their inclusive definitions of the phrase 'Pentecostal or Charismatic' ^[15]. Walter Hollenweger, founding father of academic research into Pentecostalism, is one who does this. He mentions 'the stupendous growth of Pentecostalism, Charismatics and Independents from zero to almost 500 million in less than a century' and sees 'Pentecostalism' as having three distinct forms in the global context: (1). Classical Pentecostal ^[16]; (2). The Charismatic renewal movement; and (3). Pentecostal or 'Pentecostal like independent churches in the Majority world. ^[17]

Although Pentecostals have existed for only a century, today they are among the most significant role players in Christian missions, with three quarters of them in the majority world. ^[18] According to some statistics, in 2011, 64% of the world Christians were in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Oceania, while those of the two northern continents (including Russia) constituted only 36%. When this is compared to 1900, there were 82% of world Christian population was found in Europe and North America. We have dramatic evidence of how rapidly the western share of world Christianity has decreased in the twentieth century. According to the same statistics, if present trends continue, 69% of the world's Christians will live in the South by 2025. ^[19]

David Barrett projected a total of 523 million, or 28% of all Christians to be Pentecostals and Charismatics in 2000. This number was divided into four groups; (1). 18 million 'peripheral quasi-Pentecostal (3% of total), (2). 66 Million 'Denominational Pentecostal' (12%) (3). 176 Million 'Charismatic' including 105 million Catholics (32%) and (4). The largest group of 295 million neo-charismatics, that is, independents and post-denominationalists' (A massive 53%). ^[20] This clearly proves that Pentecostals especially neo-charismatics are growing fast in the Christian community.

Allen Anderson observes the growth that took place after the colonial world ended since the 1960's, and indications are that this growth accelerated after the 1980's when Pentecostal forms of Christianity began to multiply rapidly in the fledgling Pentecostal missionary movement. That too happened without much coherent organization, eventually became Pentecostal denominations with highly developed structures, centralised headquarters and international operations. This was particularly the case with the Assemblies of God - the largest Pentecostal denomination globally, but also the Church of

God (Cleveland), the Foursquare Church and the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. ^[21] It is observed that in the post-colonial period neo-Charismatic movements have grown faster than other two groups.

4. Origin of Pentecostal movements in India

Despite the view that Pentecostalism originated in the west, there are those who argue that Pentecostalism predates the western origin even though, the first Pentecostal missionary to come to India with a Pentecostal message that represents the Azusa Street was A. G Gar who came in the year 1907 to Calcutta ^[22]. If speaking of tongues was the evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, it was evident in India before the Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles. Eminent Pentecostal theologians like A. C George clearly emphasises that there were Pentecostal phenomena clearly evident in Indian soil like that of Aroolappen, in Tamil Nadu and Pandita Ramabai in Pune. ^[23] One might say classical Pentecostalism was birthed in India also. ^[24] This does not mean that the arrival of western Pentecostalism had no impact in India. A systematic form of Pentecostal church was started in India with the arrival of classical Pentecostals from the west. In the beginning of twentieth century there were many foreign Pentecostal missionaries from abroad. Most significant among them was Robert F Cook from USA. ^[25]

It is almost a century now, since the Pentecostal phenomenon appeared in the sub-continent. What started as a trickle at the turn of the 20th century became a powerful movement and a mighty river by the end of the century, impacting almost all main-line churches in India in one way or another. That general movement has produced a variety of Pentecostal churches-some organized denominations and others independent churches-which have played a major role in the history of modern Christianity in India in terms of church planting and church growth. Of these, the Assemblies of God, the Indian Pentecostal church of God, Church of God (Full Gospel) and The Pentecostal Mission (TPM) become the leading Pentecostal denominations with national outlook and outreach ministries. A.C George notes;

It is also a fact that the pioneers of Indian Pentecostalism have gone to be with the Lord, and the ones that are in the front line of ministry and administration today are either second or third generation Pentecostals who have to depend mainly on the memory of what they have heard from their fathers. This is a handicap for the historians who have to reconstruct the history of Pentecostal origins in India. Only a few among the pioneers left any records about their own personal experiences and their

¹⁵ Charismatic is a movement in Christian Church

¹⁶ The classical Pentecostal churches, which had their origins in the US at the beginning of this century, have since grown to be the largest family of Protestant Christians in the world. Known at first simply as "Pentecostal" churches they were given the added designation "classical" at about 1960 to distinguish them from the neo-Pentecostals in the mainline (non-Pentecostal) churches and the Roman Catholic Church, which were soon called charismatic

¹⁷ Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origin and developments Worldwide* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), 1

¹⁸ The term 'majority world' is adapted from the new internationalist and is used to refer Asia and Pacific, Africa, South America and the Caribbean.

¹⁹ Todd M. Johnson, David Barrett, and Peter F. Crossing, 'Christianity 2011: Martyrs and the Resurgence of Religion', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 35.1 (2011),29

²⁰ David B. Barrett, Todd M. Johnson, And Peter F. Crossing, 'Missiometrics 2006; Goals, Resources, Doctrines of the 350 Christian World Communions' *International Bulletin of missionary Research* 30:1 (2006), 28

²¹ Allan Heaton Anderson, "The Emergence of a Multidimensional Global Missionary Movement: A Historical Review, Pentecostal Mission and Global Christianity, Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series, Volume, 20, edited by Wonsuk Ma, Veli-Matti Karkkainen, J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, UK, Regnum Books International, 22, 23

²² Thomas, Dalit and Tribal Christians of India..., 307

²³ A.C George, *Trailblazers for God: A History of the Assemblies of God India* (Bangalore: SABC Publications, 2004), 29,30.

²⁴ AC George, *Trailblazers for God...*, 29

²⁵ Robert F. Cook, *Half A century of Divine Leading and 37 years of Apostolic Achievements in South India*, (Tennessee: Church of God Foreign Missions Department, 1955) 16

involvement in the formation of Pentecostal churches.^[26]

A study of the history of revivals will show that revivals do not begin by chance. They are, rather, the products of intense preparations, prayer and waiting on God. This is also true of the revivals that came to the southern parts of India and paved the way for the arrival of Pentecostalism.^[27]

God visited the land of India also and poured out His Spirit upon those who were eager to partake of the gift of the Spirit, as in the day of Pentecost. This supernatural experience accompanied by “glossolalia” speaking in tongues and other spirit phenomena produced a movement which gathered momentum within a few years.

The Pentecostal Message and experience came to the People of South India as early as the beginning of the twentieth century producing ripples in the traditional main-line churches. As the movement gained strength it attracted many members of the existing churches and subsequently several of them left their mother churches to become part of the new movement of the Spirit. Initially these believers met together for worship, prayer and fellowship—all in an informal way. Some of the men among them, who were able to communicate with the western missionaries, joined these missionaries and worked with them as translators, managers, editors of magazines etc. Later when different Pentecostal organizations were formed, these “brothers” as they addressed each other—became members or workers of particular groups.

5. Christian Indigenous Movements in India

Indigenous form of Christianity was seen since the beginning of Christianity in India. Question comes what is indigenous church, “it is a group of believers, who live out their life including their socialized Christian activity in the patterns of the local society and for whom any transformation of that society comes out of their felt needs, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures”^[28] The early Christians in India, kept the indigenous life style and kept separate identity in the non-Christian society.

This community has preserved its Christian faith throughout the centuries in spite of the fact that they have been surrounded by non-Christians, and rather cut off from the mainstream of the Christian world. When people from the west came to Malabar, they were surprised to see how accommodating the Christians of the St. Thomas tradition were. The example that these Christians left for the successive generation remains a real challenge to the churches in India^[29]

Christian church in India kept the indigenous identity until the arrival of Portuguese people. “The synod of Udayamperur

(1599) prohibited many of the social customs of the St. Thomas Christians since the Europeans failed to understand the indigenous nature of this church”.^[30] National feeling was in the church during independence, especially after Revolt in 1857, it affected the church, many people in the church felt that we should come out of the foreign control, K.M George says,

There were among Indian Christians several examples of national upheaval after 1857, which mostly led the form of opposition to missionaries. It seems that the first of these movements started in Tinnevely in 1858, when a group of Nadar Christians broke away from the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and formed the Hindu Church of the Lord Jesus, partly due to a dispute between CMS and partly because of the national feeling.^[31]

An amazing growth of independent Christian movement was witnessed after independence which was indigenous in nature. Roger Hedlund defined Indigenous movements in India as, “the Indian incarnation of the Christian faith. These movements are demonstrations of the translatability of the Gospel. These churches are of the “Little Tradition” frequently (Pejoratively) have been classed as sects.”^[32] Many such movements started in different parts of South India. Hedlund divided this category in three sections, first category focuses on healing. He brings Subba Rao and the Bible Mission of Fr. Devadas under this category. Second division is Brethren, Baptist, Bro. Bakht Singh and numerous other local independent assemblies/groups. These are examples of a “Holiness” groups which would also be included in the movement. Third category is, numerous indigenous South Indian Pentecostal fellowships, denominations and organizations. The majority of the people come under this group, and they are mostly known in four States of South India.^[33]

5.1 Indigenous Pentecostalism

Indian indigenous Christianity can be divided into two categories, those come under Pentecostal or charismatic tradition and those of non-Pentecostal in character. All the Pentecostal churches are not indigenous origin and all the indigenous churches are not Pentecostal.^[34] Assemblies of God (AG) and Church of God have no Indian origin. After independence they became indigenous in leadership. Indian Pentecostal Church of God (IPC), Ceylon Pentecostal Mission, Sharon Fellowship Church etc. have come under indigenous category. Brethren Assembly comes under indigenous group but this is not Pentecostal.

5.2 Origin and growth of Largest Indigenous Pentecostal Church in India

The origin of Indian Pentecostal church is closely associated with K.E Abraham. He born in a Syrian orthodox family. K.E

²⁶ A.C George, “Pentecostal Beginnings in India” in *Dharma Deepika: A South Asian Journal of Missiological Research* (July-December, Volume 6 Number 2, 2002, 40-45

²⁷ A.C George, *Trailblazers for God: A History of the Assemblies of God of India*, (Bangalore: SABC Publications, 2004), 30.

²⁸ William A. Smalley, “Cultural Implications of an Indigenous Church”, *Perspective on the World Christian Movement*. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (eds) (California: William Carey Library) 497.

²⁹ Francis Thonippara, “St. Thomas Christians: the First Indigenous Church of India” *Christianity is Indian*, Edited by Roger E. Hedlund, 60

³⁰ Ibid: 77

³¹ K.M George, *Christianity in India Through the Centuries* (Secunderabad: Authentic Books, 2007), 306

³² Roger E. Hedlund, *Quest for Identity: India's Churches of Indigenous Origin* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2000), 1

³³ Ibid: 2

³⁴ Hedlund, *Quest for Identity*....., 136.

Abraham is considered as the pioneer, founder and first president of Indian Pentecostal Church of God. In the begging of his ministry he was associated with Robert Cook, a foreign Pentecostal missionary. They worked together until 1930 in preaching, teaching and pioneering new churches. Then he separated from Robert cook over the issue of foreign control on Indian church. Roger Hedlund says, "...they separated over issue of independence of the Indian churches and the question of voluntary versus paid mission workers" [35] but the Peter C. Pothan mentioned,

K.E Abraham, a pastor who had worked closely with Cook for a number of years, decided that he no longer wanted the mission work taking place in India to receive in India to receive foreign funds "with the reins in the hands of the westerners". With that as his main reason, he split from Cook. He gathered the vast majority of the Syrian Christians to join with hi in leaving Cook's 'Western' organization to form an Independent, Indigenous church. [36]

Abraham with his Indian friends started Indian Pentecostal Church of God (IPC) which was Indigenous in nature. T K Mathew says, "As the number of churches increased all over India, the South India Pentecostal church was renamed as the India Pentecostal Church and was registered with the Indian government under that name in 1935" [37]. Varghese opines that the name was changed to show the "national and indigenous character" of the church. [38] The Indian Pentecostal Church of God was registered under the Society Acts XXI of 1860 at Eluru, Andhra Pradesh in British India [39]. It was necessary to register under British government for marriage license and for burial place. In those times, there was no registration in Travancore.

In the begining years Indian Pentecostal Church flourished in the South Indian states especially in Andhra Pradesh and Kerala. Hedlund mentioned the growth of the Indian Pentecostal Church of God,

By 1974 there were 450 self-supporting churches in Andhra, and 900 churches throughout India. By 1997 IPC had more than 3000 local churches in India including 1700 in Kerala, 700 in Andhra, 210 in Tamil Nadu, 70 in Karnataka, and smaller numbers of churches in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and several regions of North India and the North East. [40]

At present according IPC has 7,500 churches in different states of India and abroad. [41] IPC is considered the largest indigenous Pentecostal movement in India. [42]

The IPC is an important expression of Christian nationalism in India prior to India's independence. The IPC thus challenged the Assemblies of God and Church of God which were of

missionary origin in India. [43] IPC is considered the largest indigenous Pentecostal movement in India. It continues to grow at the average rate of one new church per week. Dedicated young people, trained in the Bible School, sent to the evangelized fields, are the key to this continued expansion. [44].

5.3 Indigenous practices of Indian Pentecostal Church of God (IPC)

Indian Pentecostal Church of God (IPC) follow certain indigenous practises which is unique with this movement.

5.3.1 The practice of self-sustenance

Indian Pentecostal Churches (IPC) adopt the principal of self-supporting of Local churches. Hedlund asserts that Roger E. Hedlund says,

K.E Abraham believed that ministry could progress better without foreign missionary domination. Self-supporting churches should be led by self-sacrificing national ministers. Leadership should not be in the hands of foreigners. Local churches should manage their own affairs and hold their own property. [45]

The principle of self-supporting in a great extent impacted the growth of the local church. K E Abraham followed the pattern of voluntary employing workers. He, no longer wanted the mission work taking place in India to receive foreign funds. Even today the IPC completely depend upon the local church for its funding. According to Roger E Hedlund "New Christian movements can be understood as expressions of nationalism in response to colonialism." [46]

5.3.2 The Principle of Self Governance

In the beginning of 20th century, western Pentecostal missionaries came to India intending to preach the Pentecostal message and establish western Pentecostal denominations. Their attitude was similar to mainline protestant missionaries, who generally maintained the colonial mentality, dominated the native leaders, and tried to import the western brand of Pentecostalism. [47] Yebbeju point out that, "Robert Cook fits the role of a typical colonizer, like many other western missionaries. He worked with native leaders and dalits, but considered himself superior as Whiteman" [48] The publication, *A Quarter Century of Divine Leading in India and a Half a Century of Divine Leading and 37 years of Apostolic achievement in South India, noted that Cook portrayed himself as a bearer of light to "Dark India."* He highlighted what he accomplished in India through his missionary work at same time he ignored local leaders. V V Thomas points out that he ignored the efforts of Dalit local leaders in his writings, but at the same time he mentioned about Syrian

³⁵ Ibid;141

³⁶ Pothan, *Pentecostal Movement...*64

³⁷ Thomas, *Dalit and Tribal Christian of India*; 305

³⁸ Varghese, *Reformation brings Revival...*, 177

³⁹ Abraham, *Yeshukristhuvinte...*, 260

⁴⁰ Hedlund, *Quest for Identity...*141

⁴¹ *Indian Pentecostal Church of God (official site)* <http://ipc.international/about-us/> on 14th August,

⁴² Hedlund, *Quest for Identity*, 141.

⁴³ Ibid;

⁴⁴ Ibid; 141.

⁴⁵ Hedlund, *Quest for Identity...*, 142.

⁴⁶ Hedlund, "Nationalism and the Indian Pentecostal Church of God"..., 93

⁴⁷ YabbejuRapaka "The Indian Pentecostal Church of God in Andhra Pradesh: A study of Dalit Pentecostalism" (Rengent University: School of Divinity: Thesis on Doctor of Philosophy in renewal Studies, 2011) 80

⁴⁸ Ibid; 81

associates ^[49].

A few Indian Pentecostal local leaders, under the leadership of K E Abraham were not happy with foreign control over Indian Church. They have started the Indian Pentecostal Church of God with this concern. Hedlund asserts that this does not mean that "Indian Pentecostal Church of God refused foreign assistance" but the essential issue was that "there should be no foreign mission control" ^[50]. Abraham believed that "ministry could progress better without foreign missionary domination and leadership should not be in the hands of foreigners". ^[51] One other factor for the growth of Indian Pentecostal Church of God (IPC) is the self-governing principle.

5.3.3 The Principle of Self-Propagation

Indian Pentecostal Church of God (IPC) believes that propagation of faith should be done by the native missionaries. In order to prepare native missionaries K.E Abraham started a training centre in Kerala. The first Bible School was started by Pentecostals in India by John H. Burgess in 1927 under Assemblies of God Church. ^[52] IPC's first Bible School was started in Kumbanadu, Kerala by KE Abraham to train pastors for Indian Pentecostal Church of God. Today IPC has training centres almost every state of India. Habel G Verghese states that "For evangelism to be effective, Churches in Asia, must, of necessity, be indigenous and independent-independent Christian Churches in independent India." ^[53] The effective native missionaries of which caused the growth of the church.

5.3.4 Indigenous Worship

One of the reasons for the growth of the Indian Pentecostal church is the indigenous worship style. Pentecostal churches give much of priority for the worship. Pentecostal churches are known for a distinctive style of praise and worship that is often natural and enthusiastic. K.E Abraham encouraged Indian style of music, worship and ministry. In the Indian tradition the devotees sit on the ground to worship after removing their shoes and slippers. They clap their hands and sing. They use Indian instruments like drum and tambourine and not a guitar, piono or violin for their worship service. They also use indigenous song. ^[54] Kunjappan Varghese says,

Most of the main line churches in India were after the western style. They had a pulpit and pews like the western churches. Abraham introduced an indigenous form of worship. Instead of pews and chairs, they used mats or sheets on the floor and people sat on the while worshipping. Abraham avoided using liturgy in the churches. He also avoided western music and used Karnatic music and songs. They worshiped with clapping

of hands while singing ^[55].

While Pentecostal congregations do sing and worship corporately, individual worshipers are also encouraged to express their love and devotion to God as their heart and the spirit of God move them ^[56].

5.4 Social Impact of Indian Pentecostal Church of God (IPC)

Indian Pentecostal church of God (IPC) also impacted much for the development of the society. Few observations mentioned below

5.4.1 Social Equality

Indian society is divided on caste basis. It impacted the society in various ways - upper castes getting the privilege everywhere while the lower castes are discriminated against. Dalits in India made several attempts to get their rights in the society. Discrimination was reflected in every area of a Dalit's life including religion. Due to the religious discrimination many Dalits are converted to other religions including Christianity. 60%- 70% Indian Christian population Dalits. There were several crises in the main line churches at the beginning of the 20th century. Caste distinction was a serious problem in Christian churches in South India. Depressed classes found solace in the Pentecostal churches. "It may be noted that hundreds of depressed class members of the Anglican Church and of the London Missionary Society in Karnataka, joined Pentecostal movement in their search for identity in society and church". ^[57]

Pentecostal churches always welcomed Dalits to their fold. Many Dalits were attracted to the Pentecostal faith from other religions due to the acceptance and freedom in Pentecostal churches. Today many Dalits are working in Pentecostal churches in various high leadership posts. This attitude of the Pentecostal churches provided growth for the entire movements all over India.

5.4.2 Women's Empowerment

Women have been given freedom in IPC churches as men. In Pentecostal churches many women served the church in different capacities like preacher, teacher, and prophet and some Pentecostal churches also ordain women as pastor, the highest religious role. IPC church also has a wing called *Sahodari Samajam* (Women Fellowship), where they have been given complete freedom to exhibit their talents and gifts.

5.4.3 A holistic Approach

Pentecostal churches are very accessible and connected with the people and society. Pentecostal churches give importance to pastoral care. Pastors support not only involved in the spiritual matters but also in other areas in of a believer's life. In a typical Pentecostal church pastor will have close ties with every family. Much of the matters in the family are shared

⁴⁹ VV Thomas, *Dalit Pentecostalism: Spirituality of the Empowered poor* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2008), 235.

⁵⁰ Roger E Hedlund, "Nationalism and the Indian Pentecostal Church of God," *Indian Church Review*, 39/2 (December,2005); 95

⁵¹ Ibid; 95

⁵² *Bethel Bible School*, <http://www.bbcpunalur.in/page.php?show=about-us&id=c4ca4238a0b923820dcc509a6f75849b>, on 24th August, 2018.

⁵³ Habel G Varghese, *An Apostle from Modern India: A Brief Life story of Rev. Dr. K.E Abraham 1st edition*. (Christian Literature service of India, 1974), 102

⁵⁴ Potan, Pentecostal Movement...64

⁵⁵ Varghese, Reformation brings Reviva..., 137

⁵⁶ *Pentecostal praise and worship*, <https://classroom.synonym.com/pentecostal-praise-worship-12085048.html>, on 23rd, August, 2018.

⁵⁷ Simon George, "An evaluation of Pastoral Style of Indian Pentecostal Church of God in Karnataka in the light of First peter 5:1-3 27" M.Th Dissertation, SAIACS,1999. 56

with the pastor for the spiritual guidance. Most of the families consider the Pastor as one of their family members as a spiritual parent. It enables pastor to give suggestions according to the need and assist in solving the problems they face. Church members approach pastor for children's education matter, family issues, financial problems, physical issues etc. They believe that pastor will pray and seek for God's help on their matter.

Today most of the church pastors give counselling to its members. They also conduct different seminars to meet the needs of different groups of people in the church like family seminar, youth seminar, women's seminar etc. This helps meet the needs of the group collectively. In the traditional churches, the priest or pastor is not accessible to its believers, this made many people to come to the Pentecostal churches. The holistic approach of the Pentecostal churches helped in the rapid growth of the church.

5.4.4 Social Impact

Pentecostalism has impacted the social life of its members also. To be a Pentecostal church member one has to follow strict moral principles. Pentecostal churches follow certain written and unwritten moral principles on drunkenness, smoking, moral purity etc. Those who do not follow these guidelines of Pentecostal church are not allowed to participate in church activities.

Most of the middle and lower class people in South India have problems of drunkenness and smoking. Many families have collapsed or they are in crises due to these bad habits. Pentecostals strictly teach against vices and explain the consequences from the Bible and medical science, this have enabled many individuals be free of these habits. Pentecostal churches also make public social awareness campaigns against smoking and drunkenness. This has strengthened the economic condition of many families. Research has come across and heard testimonies from many such families. Any Pentecostal member caught practicing these vices are either warned or ex-communicated from the church. This has strengthened social life of people in South India, especially in Kerala. The Bible also teaches that drunkard will never enter the heaven. The people in general consider certain vices even drunkenness as not wrong.

6. Conclusion

Pentecostalism is the fastest growing movement in Christianity. Even though an incipient form of Pentecostalism was in India before the arrival western Pentecostal missionaries the systematic form of Pentecostalism was brought by western missionaries. However certain Pentecostal leaders in India felt the need of an indigenous Pentecostal Movement which lead the formation of Indian Pentecostal Church of God (IPC). The founders of IPC understood the fact that Indian church should free from the western control and completely indigenous. Today IPC is the largest Indigenous Pentecostal Church in India.

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