

**To: Dr. Ian Payne, President, South Asia Institute for Advanced Christian Studies (SAIACS)**

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**Subject: The Development of an Indian-Focused Evangelical Christian Comprehensive Web Site\*  
by a Masters or Doctoral Student at SAIACS.**

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## **Abstract**

The following proposal presents the need for the development of an Indian-focused Evangelical Christian comprehensive website making use of existing web sites for the purpose of a. Educating and training Christian clergy and laity, b. Developing leaders within the church, and c. Making readily available well designed Christian literature and media including web-based material to the masses, and to intellectuals and the developing middle class.

## **I. Background and Need:**

Christianity is undergoing considerable growth in India and often among individuals and groups who have had little access to extensive Christian literature, media and theological education. Yet they live and commonly work in a world of great diversity, rapid change, secular and religious challenges, economic and sociological mobilization, internet access, and significantly increased intellectual sophistication. They are exposed to both historic religious issues and increasingly to those posed by science and wider modernity.

As millions of Indians consider Christian faith there is a great challenge in

- A. Leadership development within the church.
- B. Disciplining those who have recently made Christian commitments.
- C. Making readily available well designed Christian literature and media including web-based material to the masses, intellectuals and the developing middle class.

This is a challenge to both denominational mission agencies and associations such as the India Mission Association (IMA) a group of more than 230 more typically independent Evangelical Christian Indian mission associations representing several million people and the Evangelical Fellowship of India (EFI).

Members of these groups vary in a great diversity of ways such as in their missions, goals, histories, needs and opportunities. They also vary in their educational, evangelization and economic resources. Some have historically focused on serving the Dalits and other lower classes. Others seek to serve the developing middle class. However, they have areas in common - a commitment to building the Kingdom of God and a common profound need for effective low-cost leadership development resources, and education and evangelization resources made increasing available via the internet.

One should ask, "What about the potential value of present secular search engines such as Google?" These certainly can assist Christians in a general sense, and are often helpful in researching a particular Christian concept and term. However, these search engines are not designed primarily to help one better understand historic and contemporary Evangelical perspectives, or resources. Further, among the diversity of web sites on any given topic there is much inadequate or misleading information.

There are few if any, comprehensive Hindi or English language, Indian-focused Evangelical Christian websites. US based Christian search engines tend to be limited in scope which limits their usefulness. To put this in context, the Times of India reported February 19, 2014 that 238 million Indian households had Internet access in 2013.

\*The term Comprehensive Web Site is used to indicate the complexity of what is envisioned as a website of websites that is comprehensive but not the same as a search engine.

The worldwide web has a great potential to assist the rapidly developing Indian church. What is needed is an comprehensive internet website i.e. a website of websites with an Evangelical Christian focus that would provide Christians with a low cost, easily accessible, well-organized, extensive source of quality Christian resources.

Rather than involving the time and expense of developing new material, this proposal simply suggests the development of a website that brings together the best of presently available Indian and Western Christian websites. Thus, the website would serve Indian churches and individuals, Indian seekers, organizations and their members such as the IMA, EFI and millions of Christian and non-Christian Indians and around the globe.

## II. Proposal:

The design of an extensive internet-based India-focused website i.e. a website of websites, with an Evangelical Christian perspective to point people to existing web sites for the

- A. Educating and training Christian clergy and laity.
- B. Development of leaders.
- C. Education and evangelization of Indians with special emphasis on secular and religious Indian intellectuals and the vast middle class.

## III. Goals and Activities:

- A. Goal** - To make readily available an extensive internet-based resource of materials that are effective in
  1. Educating and training Christian clergy and laity.
  2. Presenting the gospel and Christian perspectives to non-Christians.

- B. Activities** – The website designer will consult with Indian Christian scholars and website designers and with agencies such as the IMA in developing an internet-based website of web sites.

### 1. Develop a data base of excellent books and media which present Evangelical Christian perspectives. They will

- a. Search existing internet sites and search engines to locate excellent materials and include these in the comprehensive being developed. These would include Books, reprints of articles, videos, CDs, Movies, DVDs, streaming videos, blogs, and PowerPoint presentations by western and non-western authors, scholars, film producers including e.g.
  - Biblical studies materials, e.g. [HTTP://BIBLEGATEWAY.COM](http://BIBLEGATEWAY.COM); the Christian Classics Ethereal Library, [HTTP://WWW.CCEL.ORG](http://WWW.CCEL.ORG). and [WWW.BIBLESTUDYTOOLS.COM](http://WWW.BIBLESTUDYTOOLS.COM).
  - Books, e.g. by C.S. Lewis, G.K. Chesterton, John Stott, Timothy Keller, N.T. Wright, Ravi Zacharias etc.
  - Christian think-tanks e.g. the Cambridge, UK-based Faraday Institute for Science and Religion [www.faraday.st-edmunds.cam.ac.uk](http://www.faraday.st-edmunds.cam.ac.uk).
- b. Group these by subject areas, media form, user ages, relevance to particular groups, etc.
- c. Include, only if time and resources permit annotated bibliographies of some the works cited.
- d. Before undertaking the above make a careful search of the internet to determine if there are other internet-based programs that could help in the development of the proposed program and if so, to profit from an understanding of these

### 2. Introduction to Christianity for each of several people groups.

Use websites to locate presentations

- a. Specifically designed for a particular people group such as Hindu, Muslim (each including special presentations for particular subgroups) etc.
- b. Which clearly and candidly but with great sensitivity, present the gospel. A question/answer format could be used.

- c. Reviewed by devout believers of particular non-Christian faiths so that the content is both candid and kindly presented.

These presentations could be both used in evangelism and incorporated into leadership training and education programs for pastors and laity. Existing material would be sought and if of appropriate quality would be used initially and new material added as it becomes available.

### 3. Leadership Training and Education Materials including:

- a. Examples of several excellent comprehensive training and educational programs of Bible colleges, seminaries, church planting institutes, churches, and other leadership institutions that could serve as models.
- b. Basic education and training modules presently available and applicable to most Indian ethnic groups. These could then be refined to meet the more unique needs of particular mission agencies.
- c. Development of a limited number of Leadership Training and Education programs to serve as additional models.
- d. Examples of Bible college and Christian university curricula and other materials, and health care and other humanitarian program literature.

Thus, churches and Christian organizations could gain significantly from the experiences and insights of fellow members and other agencies committed to building the Kingdom of God.

## IV. Vision: Our vision is that each day Indian

1. **Pastors** will download articles from
  - a. Aspects of theology to church growth.
  - b. Sermon preparation and Biblical study to issues of caring for the poor and dying.
  - c. Science issues such as questions of origins and stem cell research to family concerns.
  - d. Coping with depression to financial planning.

They will review Christian books from CS Lewis to Ravi Zacharias and other forms of literature and media for possible recommendation to their people.

2. **University Students and Intellectuals - Christians and non-Christians** will access
  - a. Christian books such as the classic works of C.S. Lewis and G.K. Chesterton, present-day authors such as Timothy Keller, N.T. Wright, Philip Yancey, and Francis Collins.
  - b. Major Evangelical journals and their extensive web sites e.g. Christianity Today.com.
  - c. Christian scholars at think-tanks e.g. Cambridge University- based Faraday Institute [www.faraday.st-edmunds.cam.ac.uk](http://www.faraday.st-edmunds.cam.ac.uk) and will be encouraged to access scholarly blogs.
3. **Families, Youth and Youth leaders** will have access to a great variety of Christian films, and other forms of media, and read reviews for possible use in their homes and churches.
4. **Men, Woman and Families** will access a variety of children, family, and parenting literature, and literature dealing with various aspects of the Christian faith and DVD'S, CD's, and books that they can view on line, download, or purchase.
5. **Administrators, faculty, and students** at secular and Christian universities, Bible colleges, seminaries, church planting institutes, and local churches will participate in web-based leadership training programs.
6. **Hindus and Muslims** will read kindly presented articles that present the key beliefs of Christian faith discuss how these relate to their faith and will access, in the privacy of their homes, the extensive internet-based resources.
7. **Churches and Christian organizations** will have an increased sense of bonding and unity of purpose as they access the various components of the internet-based resource.