

## **The Holy Spirit in Mission in India Indian Contribution to Contemporary Mission Pneumatology**

*Kirsteen Kim*

In the late twentieth century, the Western churches rediscovered the truth of the creedal statements that in addition to God the Father and God the Son, there is also God the Spirit. Furthermore Western theologians began to discuss the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit not only in the church and the human heart but also in the world. The Canberra Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1991 highlighted controversy over the relationship between the mission of the Son and the mission of the Spirit and raised the question of how and where the Spirit is discerned. The Assembly drew attention to the importance of further discussion on the mission of the Spirit and the potential for applying a pneumatological approach to a range of missiological questions.<sup>1</sup> These included: What is the source of the Spirit and the spiritual resources for mission? What is the nature of the Spirit's involvement in history? What is the locus of the Spirit – creation, community or human heart? Can pneumatology help to solve the “christological impasse” in theology of religions? What does theology of the Spirit suggest about identity, community and the nature of Christian unity? Are we dealing with one Spirit or many spirits? What constitutes authentic mission spirituality?<sup>2</sup>

Many of the most interesting recent contributions to discussion of mission pneumatology come from theologians who are reflecting on the Holy Spirit within the context of a cultural understanding of spirit and spirits that differs significantly from western frameworks. India – a land where there is deep awareness of one universal Spirit and there are also many spiritualities – offers outstanding examples of creative thinking on the Spirit from Christian theologians. The purpose of this paper is to explore Indian Christian theology from the perspective of pneumatology to highlight its contribution to international debate.

### **God as Spirit**

In his *Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*, Robin Boyd observed that over nearly two hundred years of Indian Christian theology pneumatology, particularly as it is expressed in John's gospel, emerges as the “cornerstone”. That is, God's dealings with the world are seen primarily in terms of the Spirit.<sup>3</sup> This reflects the dominant cultural understanding that God is Spirit and that the earth is the embodiment of the feminine power of God. Similarly, the Catholic theologian Felix Wilfred explains to critics of Indian theology that, in keeping with Eastern religions in general, Asian Christian theologies recognise particularly “the inexhaustible aspect of the divine mystery which St John expresses laconically: ‘God is spirit’ (Jn 4.24)”.<sup>4</sup>

### **Spirit christology**

The Indian christology that Boyd describes tends therefore to be “Spirit christology” rather than “Logos christology”, that is, it begins from the work of God in the world through God's Spirit since the creation and

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Kinnamon (ed.), *Signs of the Spirit*. Official Report of the Seventh Assembly of the WCC, Canberra, 1991 (Geneva: WCC, 1991).

<sup>2</sup> Kirsteen Kim, *Mission Pneumatology, with Special Reference to the Indian Theologies of the Holy Spirit of Stanley Samartha, Vandana and Samuel Rayan*. PhD thesis, University of Birmingham 2002.

<sup>3</sup> Robin H.S. Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*, revised edition (Delhi: ISPCK, 1975), p. 241-42.

<sup>4</sup> Felix Wilfred, “Towards a Better Understanding of Asian Theology: Some Basic Issues”, *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 62/12 (1998), pp. 890-915.

understands Jesus Christ as the fulfilment of that, rather than by justifying the claims about the person and nature of Christ. In other words, in their dialogue with the twin realities of the religious traditions of India and in awareness of the material poverty of its people, Indian theologians have been particularly concerned with the role of Jesus Christ in mediating the presence and salvation of God, rather than with the traditional Western preoccupation with matters of ontology. According to James Dunn, the New Testament record gives grounds for Spirit christology as one of the earliest traditions, which was combined with Logos christology in the development of the Trinity.<sup>5</sup>

Spirit christology amounts to a recognition that “Jesus is not only the giver but also the *receiver* of the Spirit”.<sup>6</sup> It is preferred by many Indian theologians, first because it shifts the focus of the question of uniqueness and universality from Christ to the Spirit, therefore providing a fresh approach to the question of exclusive claims about Jesus Christ, which appear so divisive in a pluralistic context. Secondly, Spirit christology is also seen as a better way of justifying and affirming the presence and activity of God outside the boundaries of the church or Christendom than the earlier “cosmic Christ” theologies, which were criticised as patronising to those of other religions or ideologies by describing them as “anonymous Christians” or in other ways appearing to co-opt them into Christian faith.

Amongst Protestants, Spirit christology tends to be presented as an Indian framework for theology as opposed to the Greek one of Logos. However this makes it difficult for those who wish to retain their allegiance to the historic creeds and a common Christian confession. The difference between these approaches is illustrated by the respective interpretations by Stanley Samartha and Lesslie Newbigin of John 16.13, in which it is said that the Spirit will lead “into all truth”. Samartha, Indian theologian and first Director of the World Council of Churches’ sub-unit on dialogue, is confident that the truth to which the Holy Spirit leads includes the truth contained in other religions,<sup>7</sup> whereas Newbigin, British missionary theologian and Bishop of the Church of South India, argues that, since all truth is found in him, “the Holy Spirit does not lead past, or beyond, or away from Jesus”.<sup>8</sup> Samartha often refers to God as Mystery in order to say that God is greater than human understanding and though Jesus is the Revealer of God, there is room for other revelations. Whereas Newbigin stresses the fullness of the revelation in Jesus Christ which has made known what was unknown.<sup>9</sup> The two therefore reached an impasse, although both affirm that truth is one and both confess Jesus Christ as source of truth.

However, Indian Catholic theologians, led by Jacques Dupuis, though initially criticised by the Vatican for their alleged view that “the mystery of God is not exhausted in the revelation in Jesus Christ but is also revealed in other religions”,<sup>10</sup> have largely succeeded in establishing the legitimacy of Spirit christology as long as it is understood that it is complementary to traditional christology not an alternative.<sup>11</sup> From their perspective, Spirit

<sup>5</sup> James D.G. Dunn, *The Christ and the Spirit: Collected Essays* Vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998), pp. 74-79.

<sup>6</sup> Alasdair I.C. Heron, *The Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit in the Bible, in the History of Christian Thought, and in Recent Theology* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1983), p. 127.

<sup>7</sup> Stanley J. Samartha, *The Pilgrim Christ – Sermons, Poems and Bible Studies* (Bangalore: ATC, 1994), pp. 47-48.

<sup>8</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *The Light Has Come: An Exposition of the Fourth Gospel* (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1982), pp. 216-17.

<sup>9</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* revised edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1995).

<sup>10</sup> Paul Mojzes & Leonard Swidler (eds.), *Christian Mission and Interreligious Dialogue* (Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990).

<sup>11</sup> Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997). See also discussion of the papal encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, which was widely interpreted as an attack on Indian theologies, in

christology is another way of saying that there is more to theology than christology or, in other words, of stating Christian belief in the Trinity. It understands the event of Jesus Christ from the perspective of the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit of God in the world since creation, while also stressing the sending of the Spirit into the world by the risen Christ.<sup>12</sup> In this approach, “all truth” in John 16.13 would be understood to be as broad as the Spirit’s work in the whole creation but also focussed in Jesus Christ.

### **The Spirit as *Atman* and *Antaryamin***

Boyd pointed out that the concept of the Holy Spirit may be rendered in Sanskrit by several different words – *atman*, *antaryamin* and *shakti* – each reflecting a different tradition and carrying different connotations.<sup>13</sup> The word *atman* (spirit, soul, self) and its cognates – including *Paramatman* (Supreme Spirit) and *antaratman* (inner spirit) – come from *advaitic* or classical Hinduism. Advaita means “oneness”, or more literally “not two-ness” or “non-duality”. Describing the Spirit as *atman* draws attention to the interior dimension, the spirit within, and its union with the universal Spirit, *Brahman*. George Gispert-Sauch finds the expression “ground of being” a better translation of the concept of *atman* than “soul” or “self”.<sup>14</sup> The Catholic ascetic, Abhishiktananda described the Holy Spirit as “the *advaita* of God, the mystery of the non-duality of the Father and the Son”.<sup>15</sup> In this vein Vandana, a leader of the Catholic ashram movement, presents *ashramic* spirituality as a holistic approach to life, leading to and flowing from a realisation of oneness with the One Spirit and hence a connectedness with the universe and with “spiritual” people regardless of gender, caste and religion.<sup>16</sup> This image of the Spirit as the unifying principle of the Godhead and therefore of the universe lies behind Samartha’s theology of dialogue, which is foundational to the ecumenical approach to other faiths.<sup>17</sup> He insisted on the relevance of the philosophy of *advaita*, claiming that the universal or “unbound” Spirit or *advaita* provides the “unitive vision” that holds Indian communities together and allows for the “traffic across the borders” that is dialogue. Samartha describes dialogue itself as not so much a method or technique but “a mood, a spirit, an attitude of love and respect” for “our neighbours of other faiths”. That is, dialogue takes place in the “milieu” of the Spirit.<sup>18</sup>

Another word used for the Holy Spirit is *Antaryamin* – “Indwelling One”, a term from the *bhakti* tradition of devotion to a personal deity. In the 1930s Bishop A.J. Appasamy used this concept to interpret the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in terms of “abiding” in John’s Gospel, understanding this to refer to the inner life of the believer, particularly in its moral dimensions.<sup>19</sup> In fact, Appasamy uses *antaryamin* to refer to the indwelling of all the persons of the Trinity, as do other famous *bhaktas* such as Narayan Vaman Tilak, the Maharashtrian poet.<sup>20</sup> It seems the closeness of the *bhakti* relationship with the divine needs no mediation and therefore no explicit

William R. Burrows, *Redemption and Dialogue: Reading Redemptoris Missio and Dialogue and Proclamation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993).

<sup>12</sup> Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 196-98.

<sup>13</sup> Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*, p. 241.

<sup>14</sup> George Gispert-Sauch, “Atman”, *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 63/1 (1999), p. 80.

<sup>15</sup> Abhishiktananda, *Saccidananda: A Christian Approach to Advaitic Experience* revised edition (Delhi: ISPCK, 1984), p. 184.

<sup>16</sup> Vandana (ed.), *Christian Ashrams - a Movement with a Future?* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1993).

<sup>17</sup> Samartha was responsible for the World Council of Churches’ *Guidelines on Dialogue* (1979, which are still in use).

<sup>18</sup> Stanley J. Samartha, *Courage for Dialogue: Ecumenical Issues in Inter-Religious Relationships* (Geneva: WCC, 1981), pp. 100,75.

<sup>19</sup> T. Dayanandan Francis (ed.), *The Christian Bhakti of A.J. Appasamy: A Collection of His Writings* (Madras: CLS, 1992), pp. 22-42.

<sup>20</sup> Plamthodathil S. Jacob, *The Experiential Response of N.V. Tilak* (Madras: CLS, 1979).

theology of the Holy Spirit, though the language is highly spiritual. This is clearly evident in the work of Vengal Chakkarai who regards the Holy Spirit as the continuing presence of resurrected Jesus, the permanent *Avatar* or appearance of God, and concludes that “the Holy Spirit is Jesus himself taking his abode within us”. Chakkarai’s theology starts from the reality of the experience of the Spirit, of “faith-union” with Christ and he accuses Western theologians of obscuring this fact with creeds and formulations.<sup>21</sup> For the *bhakta*, the union with the Christ is not the result of renunciation and a process of self-realisation but an immediate experience in the midst of life from which loving devotion flows.<sup>22</sup> This is what gives *bhakti* its popular appeal. It is a revival or pentecostal-charismatic type of spirituality and, in this sense, many indigenous Christian movements of India, such as those described by F. Hrangkhuma,<sup>23</sup> could be described as *bhakti* movements.

### **The Spirit as *Shakti***

Believing that the Bible affirmed the presence of God in creation from the beginning, Appasamy identified the meeting place of the communities of India as a spiritual one and this paved the way for the dialogue with religion and society initiated in post-Independence India by P.D. Devanandan. In Appasamy’s view, the Christian experience of the Holy Spirit was an intensification of the general presence of the Spirit that preceded it. He therefore disagreed strongly with P. Chenchiah, who emphasised the “new cosmic energy” of the Holy Spirit released in “an outburst or inrush into history” by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, as if it had not been present before. Chenchiah, who was the leader of a group of radical Indian theologians known in the 1930s as the Madras “Rethinking Group”, reversed *advaita* mysticism by advocating the affirmation of creation and of activity rather than withdrawal from the world. He did so on the grounds that the universal Spirit or *Brahman* is manifested in the power of *Shakti*, or the Spirit, which comes upon the world from outside not within and empowers a process of evolution of creation toward a better humanity – an idea that he derived from the philosophy of Aurobindo Ghose.<sup>24</sup>

Like Appasamy, Chenchiah found the immanence of the Spirit in the Fourth Gospel in keeping with “the intellectual and spiritual leanings of India” but he differed in that he based his theology of the Spirit on a dynamic conception of *shakti* rather than the more static *antaryamin*. Chenchiah believed “the raw fact of Christ” would lead to the establishment of a new universe by a process of unconscious change in which the Spirit, like a gas, was infused into history.<sup>25</sup> Rethinking Christianity in terms of *shakti*, Chenchiah insisted that the uniqueness of Christianity could not depend on its institutions or doctrines but only in its transcendence over other faiths as the religion of new birth by the Holy Spirit.<sup>26</sup> Appasamy believed Chenchiah’s approach was more Western than Indian, that it was incompatible with orthodox Christian doctrine, and that it ignored the church.<sup>27</sup> For his part, Chenchiah rejected Appasamy’s *bhakti marga* because he saw it as a way of retreat as opposed to a dynamic way forward.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Vengal Chakkarai, *Jesus the Avatar* (Madras, 1932); reproduced in P.T. Thomas (ed.), *Vengal Chakkarai* Vol. I (Madras: CLS for UTC, 1981), pp. 42-198 (see pp. 116-31).

<sup>22</sup> Stephen Neill, *Bhakti: Hindu and Christian* (Madras: CLS, 1974).

<sup>23</sup> F. Hrangkhuma (ed.), *Christianity in India: Search for Liberation and Identity* (Delhi/Pune: ISPCK/CMS, 1998).

<sup>24</sup> D.A. Thangasamy, *The Theology of Chenchiah with Selections from His Writings* (Bangalore: CISRS, 1966).

<sup>25</sup> Francis, *The Christian Bhakti of A.J. Appasamy*, pp. 70-81.

<sup>26</sup> G.V. Job, P. Chenchiah, V. Chakkarai, D.M. Devasahayam, S. Jesudason, Eddy Asirvatham & A.N. Sudarisanam, *Rethinking Christianity in India* (Madras: A.N. Sudarisanam, 1938), pp. 47-62, Appendix.

<sup>27</sup> Francis, *The Christian Bhakti of A.J. Appasamy*, pp. 70-81.

<sup>28</sup> Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*, p. 157.

The *shakti* tradition derives from the pre-Aryan concept of primal energy, the feminine power of the creation. That is, it predates the rise of the Brahmins and the Hindu caste structure. It is therefore attractive to those who reject the hegemony of Vedic Hinduism and seek to subvert it. The late elder-statesman of Indian Christian theology, M.M. Thomas followed Chenchiah in making the new creation wrought in Christ the starting point for theology in order to interpret the gospel for modern, secular India, rather than in traditional, religious terms. Thomas recounts how Hindu reformers struggled within classical Hinduism to transform a static concept of the world as the unfolding of the Universal Spirit into a purposive one in which the Spirit is “the dynamic of cosmic evolution”. Though they succeeded in so doing, in Thomas’s view they still tended to lack a “realistic appreciation of the depth of evil which the Spirit of God has to contend with”, as described in the New Testament by the language of Satan and evil spirits.<sup>29</sup> The language of non-brahminic *shakti* contains within it the “spirituality for combat” that Thomas was searching for and lays a pneumatological foundation for theologies of liberation.

In his liberation pneumatology Samuel Rayan, theologian and long-time campaigner for the rights of the *dalits* or outcaste people of India, sees “the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God and of Jesus Christ” as the “heart of the Christian gospel”. Drawing on the *shakti* tradition, he portrays the Spirit as a “breath of fire”, who comes “to enable us to re-create our earth, not to put us to sleep” and is present “not in ethereal euphoria, but in committed historical action”.<sup>30</sup> He advocates “spiritual struggle” to overcome the forces of violence and oppression in society and bring about justice. The Spirit is the “breath” or yeast of new life that invigorates the “bread”, which is the earth, and brings about a redistribution of its resources to the benefit of all.<sup>31</sup> This understanding of the earth as a theological and a liturgical reality has made Rayan a leading voice in ecotheology in ecumenical circles.<sup>32</sup> The feminine nature of *shakti* is particularly attractive to feminist theologians, who have used the *shakti* tradition, especially its close association between the female and nature, to motivate eco-feminist commitment to the liberation of both women and creation.<sup>33</sup>

### Discerning the Spirit

Study of theologians from different strands of Indian Christian theology reveals that they discern the Spirit according to different criteria. This can be illustrated by further consideration of three of the theologians we have already mentioned, all from the late twentieth century – Stanley Samartha, Vandana and Samuel Rayan.<sup>34</sup> Samartha, a Methodist ecumenical, for example, looks for the Spirit of dialogue, who creates openness to others and enables “traffic across the boundaries” of one religion and another. In order to bring communities together for the task of nation-building, he discerns the Spirit where there is cooperation and mutual respect. Vandana, former Provincial of the Society of the Sacred Heart, seeks to build bridges between Christians and Hindus by inculturating the gospel in terms of Hindu traditions of spirituality. She sees the Spirit in the common spiritual experience which, she believes, lies at the heart of both Hinduism and Christianity: the experience of the

<sup>29</sup> M.M. Thomas, “The Holy Spirit and the Spirituality for Political Struggles”, *Ecumenical Review* 42/3-4 (1990), pp. 216-224.

<sup>30</sup> Samuel Rayan, *Breath of Fire - The Holy Spirit: Heart of the Christian Gospel* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1979), p. vii.

<sup>31</sup> T.K. John (ed.), *Bread and Breath: Essays in Honour of Samuel Rayan* (Anand, Gujarat: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1991).

<sup>32</sup> Samuel Rayan, “The Earth is the Lord’s” in David C. Hallman (ed.), *Ecotheology: Voices from South and North* (Geneva/Maryknoll: WCC/Orbis Books, 1994), pp. 130-148.

<sup>33</sup> Aruna Gnanadason, “Towards a Feminist Eco-Theology for India” in Prasanna Kumari (ed.), *A Reader in Feminist Theology* (Madras: Gurukul, 1993), pp. 95-105.

<sup>34</sup> See Kirsteen Kim, *Mission in the Spirit: The Holy Spirit in Indian Christian Theologies* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2003).

oneness of the inner self with the Divine Self or of the unity of Son with the Father. She therefore looks for the Spirit of the waters of life who brings personal peace and religious harmony. As a Jesuit liberation theologian, Rayan discerns the Spirit at work in movements for the liberation of the poor and oppressed. The “Breath of Fire” is an uncontrollable wind that consumes the unjust structures that oppress the poor and frees them to experience the good news of the kingdom where there is “bread for the breadless” and “wine for the wineless”.

Samartha’s spirit of truth, Vandana’s spirit of abiding in God and Rayan’s transforming Spirit of fire are all recognisably biblical models of the Spirit – Samartha and Vandana drawing mainly on John’s Gospel particularly and Rayan primarily on Luke. None of them alone is a full interpretation of the biblical witness to the Spirit and this suggests that all three aspects of the Spirit’s work need to be taken together. Other aspects could also be added such as witness and charismatic power.<sup>35</sup>

### **Spirit-uality**

India not only has an awareness of God as Spirit, it is also a land of many spiritualities, of which *advaitic* Hinduism, *bhakti* devotion and *shaktism* are three major types. “Spirituality” is a very difficult term to define but it is used to distinguish religious approaches or attitudes from religions themselves and thus it crosses the boundaries of religious communities. So Samartha identified and utilised a spirituality of dialogue found in all religious traditions. As we have seen above, the term need not apply only to “passive self-interiority or transcendentalism” – though it is most used by this camp – but also to active response to the world that issues from a relationship with the Divine.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, the awareness of God as Spirit explains why Asian (as illustrated by Indian) theology gives much more importance than Western theology to the categories of interiority, experience and mystery. In other words, there is a close relationship between theology and spirituality and between the mode of theologising and the religio-cultural traditions of India.<sup>37</sup> This enables Vandana to define spirituality as “life lived according to the Spirit”.<sup>38</sup> Rayan’s awareness of the Spirit’s activity in the world as Liberator and presence as Creator brings together action for human welfare with aesthetic and mystical concerns. Rayan has developed a theology of “mission in the Spirit” is also a comprehensive approach to the whole of life in which contemplation serves to motivate historical action.<sup>39</sup>

In the awareness that God is Spirit, Indian theology is not only propositional but also sometimes mystical, analogical and creative in its imagery.<sup>40</sup> Though Indian theology may be very rational, Indian theologians of many persuasions insist that theology should be interpreted more broadly than systematic formulation of doctrine. Theology is enriched by the use of symbol and myth and expressed in varied cultural forms; in other

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (London: SCM Press, 1992; trans. Margaret Kohl), 272.

<sup>36</sup> Israel Selvanayagam, “Components of a Tamil Śaiva Bhakti Experience as Evident in Māṅkavācakar’s Tiruvācakam” in David Emmanuel Singh (ed.), *Spiritual Traditions: Essential Visions for Living* (Bangalore: ISPCCK, 1998), pp. 418-38.

<sup>37</sup> Felix Wilfred, “Towards a Better Understanding of Asian Theology: Some Basic Issues”, *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 62/12 (1998), pp. 890-915.

<sup>38</sup> Vandana, “Response II [to J.B. Chethimattam] from the Perspective of an Ashramic Spirituality” in Dominic Veliath (ed.), *Towards an Indian Christian Spirituality in a Pluralistic Context: Papers and Statement of the Fourteenth Annual Meeting of the Indian Theological Association* (Bangalore: Dharmaram, 1993), pp. 99-117 (see p. 103).

<sup>39</sup> T.K. John (ed.), *Bread and Breath: Essays in Honour of Samuel Rayan S.J.* (Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1991).

<sup>40</sup> Wilfred, “Towards a Better Understanding of Asian Theology”.

words, it is an art-form as well as a science.<sup>41</sup> In the visual arts, Jyoti Sahi has reflected deeply on his work and the significance of art as a mediator of the gospel and a form of theologising. A Catholic with a Protestant and Reformed Hindu background, he aims to bridge *advaita*, *bhakti* and *shakti* frameworks through his work by expressing the “theology of Indian Christian culture” through its diverse traditions.<sup>42</sup> The heritage of *bhakti* leads many theologians to express themselves in poetry and song. Thomas Thangaraj advocates a “singable theology” as a way of changing the heart as well as educating the mind<sup>43</sup> and, similarly, Rayan describes the Spirit as a poet who “sees and senses symbolism, relationships, and meanings...” and points them out in order to inspire action for liberation.<sup>44</sup> Dance is also an immensely popular art-form in India and so Vandana creatively interprets the role of the Spirit in John’s gospel as the “dance of the waters”, moving gracefully in and between contemporary movements in India under the direction of the Master Choreographer.<sup>45</sup> Thus Indian theology reflects awareness of the creativity and boundlessness of the Spirit of God.

### Conclusion: mission in the Spirit

Interaction between Indian theologians on the theme of the Spirit addresses and sheds light on many of the questions raised in international debate at the Canberra Assembly referred to earlier. This short paper does not allow for a detailed answer to each question from an Indian perspective; this I have attempted elsewhere.<sup>46</sup> However some brief concluding remarks can be made to address them.

Indian Christian theologians have drawn attention to the mission of the Spirit that everywhere precedes that of the church. Christian mission is then defined as recognising and cooperating with the Spirit. If so, then discerning the Spirit becomes a matter of crucial significance because it determines the nature of the mission.<sup>47</sup> It is clear that Christian criteria for discernment will be derived from the life and teaching of Jesus Christ and therefore be distinct (though not necessarily different) from Hindu criteria for spiritual discernment. On the other hand, the varied interpretation of the Spirit as *atman*, *antaryamin* and *shakti* highlights the problem of discernment and raises the question of whether the one Spirit appealed to by religious leaders (both Hindu and Christian) is always legitimately identified with the Spirit of God. This diversity calls into question categorical claims that a particular tradition or spirituality or movement represents the work of the Spirit. It implies that the Spirit is associated with contemplation *and* devotion *and* acts of liberation rather than exclusively with one kind of religious expression over against another, and points towards the combination of the three – in Indian terms *jnana*, *bhakti* and *karma* – as the true evidence of the Spirit’s work.<sup>48</sup>

Spirit christology suggests an openness of approach to people of other faiths and a willingness to affirm what is good and true in other faiths on the grounds that the mission of the Spirit precedes and goes beyond the incarnation. However, use of *atman* and *antaryamin*, which lead to theologies of the Spirit of peace who

<sup>41</sup> Stanley J. Samartha, *One Christ - Many Religions: Towards a Revised Christology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 89-91; Samuel Rayan, “Theology as Art”, *Religion and Society* 26/2 (1979), pp. 77-90.

<sup>42</sup> Jyoti Sahi, *Stepping Stones: Reflections on the Theology of Indian Christian Culture* (Bangalore: ATC, 1986).

<sup>43</sup> Thomas Thangaraj, “Towards a Singable Theology” in T. Dayanandan Francis & Franklyn J. Balasundaram (eds.), *Asian Expressions of Christian Commitment* (Madras: CLS, 1992), pp. 163-72.

<sup>44</sup> Rayan, *Breath of Fire*, p. 110.

<sup>45</sup> Vandana, *Waters of Fire* third edition (Bangalore: ATC, 1989), pp. 9-24.

<sup>46</sup> Kirsteen Kim, “Mission Pneumatology”.

<sup>47</sup> Dunn, *The Christ and the Spirit: Collected Essays*, p. 72.

<sup>48</sup> Sebastian Painadath, “Towards an Indian Christian Spirituality in the Context of Religious Pluralism” in Dominic Veliath (ed.), *Towards an Indian Christian Spirituality in a Pluralistic Context. Papers and Statement of the 14th Meeting of the Indian Theological Association, Pune, Dec 1990* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1993), pp. 3-14 (see pp. 12-14).

promotes cooperation and mutual respect and who brings personal and religious harmony, contrast in India with theologies of non-Brahminic *shakti*, the Spirit of fire who refines and humanises society. They reflect the conflict in Indian Christian theology between emphasis on the inculturation of the gospel in Vedic terms that will be appreciated by caste Hindus educated in their philosophical traditions and concern for a theology of liberation for the poor, whose indigenous spirituality is of a folk tradition and who see the Hindu caste system as a major cause of their poverty. Taken together they imply that the Spirit of mission is a way of peace with justice in the knowledge that the Spirit of Jesus Christ both inspires whatever is good and true and also empowers challenge and change.

The Indian spiritual tradition also brings a distinctive contribution to the understanding of mission: the sense that mission, however it is done, should be “in the Spirit” and therefore the need to consider mission spirituality to ensure that the means of mission are consistent with its end. It implies that mission should be understood not as a task but as a spirit – the Spirit breathed into the disciples by Jesus Christ. Mission is a way of being in Christ that orients us to share the gospel. “Mission in the Spirit” calls into question some traditional models of mission and opens up the way to missionary activity that is sensitive and appreciative of the cultural and spiritual heritage of others. Awareness that the Spirit of peace is also the Spirit of fire is a reminder of the need for both presence and prophecy, affirmation as well as discernment in mission. The Spirit that is the both breath within us and also the wind that comes from outside is the medium in which true mission takes place.

**Biodata**

Dr Kirsteen Kim is Tutor at the United College of the Ascension, Selly Oak, Birmingham, UK and Coordinator of the UCA Mission Programme. Between 1993 and 1997 she taught missiology at UBS, along with her husband, Revd Dr Sebastian C.H. Kim. She is British by birth and has also lived in Korea and the USA. Her book, *Mission in the Spirit: The Holy Spirit in the Indian Christian Theologies* was published last year by ISPCK.