

# **The Varied Use of Indian Languages by Catholic Missionaries to penetrate Indian life and culture from the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries onwards**

**Charles J. Borges**

Loyola University Maryland Baltimore USA  
cborges@loyola.edu

The history of the Catholic missions in India reflects a determined effort at various levels to penetrate Indian life and culture. Each continent at different times has raised peculiar problems of cultural and religious penetration for missionaries. India, on the other hand, presented a unique case given the fact that languages abounded and that the fluid political equations across India made the work of missionaries difficult. It is, then, to their credit that despite lack of official patronage from the Portuguese government, for instance, they kept creating works of high caliber in the local languages.

Being familiar with Indian history and Jesuit history in particular for the 16<sup>th</sup> –18<sup>th</sup> centuries, I intend to highlight how these works gave missionaries a firm basis to penetrate Indian life and culture in a quiet yet convincing manner. Had it not been for these works, the work of evangelization would not have been long lasting or impressive drawing, in the process, converts who found them in them “just what they were looking for”

Missionary work was multi sided yet missionary linguistics merits a great place while we assess the fruits of all that was done with the coming to India of the Portuguese and the English in the 16th and 17th centuries.