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TOP SECRET



Preparing for the harvest ...

A new mood of aggressive evangelism has been emanating from America. Well-funded, superbly networked, backed by the highest of the land, seized of its moral supremacy, it has India as one of its key targets, reveals
VK Shashikumar in a disturbing exposé

This could be the plot of a fevered thriller. A jingoistic president, multi-million dollar corporations, high technology, a grand if furtive mission, networks spanning the globe, and biblical invocations.

Only it's real. And its got India in its crosshair.

Religious expansionism has not witnessed this scale, scope, and state resources in a long time. Detailed investigations by Tehelka reveal that American evangelical agencies have established in India an enormous, well-coordinated and strategised religious conversion plan. The operation was launched in the early 1990s but really came into its own after George W Bush Jr, an avowed born-again Christian, became president of the United States in 2001. Since then, aggressive evangelists have found pro-active support from the new administration in their efforts to convert some sections of Indian society to Christianity. At the heart of this complex and sophisticated operation is a simple strategy-convert locals and then give them the know-how and money to plant their own churches and multiply.

Around the time that Bush Jr moved into the Oval office, a worldwide conversion movement, funded and effected by American evangelical groups, was peaking in India. The movement, which began as AD2000 & Beyond and later morphed into Joshua Project I and Joshua Project II, was designed to be a sledgehammer-a breathtaking, decade-long steamroller of a campaign that would set the stage for a systematic, sophisticated and self-sustaining "harvest" of the "unreached people groups" in India in the 21st century. It was just as the operation was taking off that the script changed. Much to the delight of American evangelicals, one of their own, George Bush Jr, became the occupant of the White House.








In a major policy decision taken very early into his presidency, Bush, on January 29, 2001, unveiled a "faith based" social service initiative that included a new White House office to promote government aid to churches and Christian faith-based organisations. This, in effect, threw the massive weight of the federal government behind religious groups and religious conversions. The Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives was set up in the White House in the first week of February 2002 and a man called Jim Towey was appointed director. (A snap introduction to Towey: he was the legal counsel to Mother Teresa in the late 1980s.) Though Bush's initiative to fund "salvation and religious conversion" is stalled in the Congress over constitutional and civil rights concerns, he has pushed for its implementation through executive orders.

White House-Christian Coalition nexus

The American press is replete with reports on Bush's largesse to faith-based organisations. They say it's his "return gift" to the Christian Right for having loyally supported his presidential campaign. The Christian Coalition, founded by American TV evangelist and head of the multi-billion Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN), Pat Robertson, played a crucial role in the 2000 election. Recently, in his TV programme, Club 700, broadcast on CBN, Robertson created a stir by announcing that he is confident Bush will win the 2004 election in a "blowout" because God has told him so.

Indeed, Bush is keen to retain what we call the votebank and Americans 'the base'. After all, the Far Right Christian evangelists have also been the most loyal backers of his hardline militarism in

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Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere.

But there is another, perhaps more important, reason why Bush is keen on supporting his evangelist friends who run huge transnational missionary organisations (TMOs). In the decade 1990-2000 they ran a global intelligence operation so complex and sophisticated that its scale and implications are no less than staggering. This operation has put in place a system which enables the US government to access any ethnographic information on any location virtually at the click of the mouse. This network in India, established with funding and strategic assistance from US-based TMOs, gives US intelligence agencies virtually real time access to every nook and corner of the country. (See 'List of TMOs Active in India')

Since Bush's ascendancy to the presidency this network of networks has multiplied rapidly in India. Bush supports conversion in India because he supports those American TMOs who fund and strategise conversion activities in this country. Organisations like the International Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention, Christian Aid, World Vision, Seventh Day Adventist Church and multi-billion enterprises run by evangelists like Pat Robertson, Billy Graham and Roger Houtsma, amongst many others, were instrumental in running a coordinated conversion campaign in India under the banner of AD2000. These later became the Joshua Project and when the decade-long movement officially closed down in March 2001, Joshua Project II was launched to sustain conversions and intelligence-gathering. Graham's TMO, Billy Graham Evangelist Association, supports conversion activities in Gurgaon, Haryana, and Kolkata.

When AD2000 was conceived for India, the plan was based on a military model with the intent to invade, occupy, control, or subjugate its population. It was based on solid intelligence emanating from the ground and well-researched information on various facets of selected people groups. The idea was to send out spying missions to source micro details on religion and culture. The social and economic divisions in the various Indian communities were closely examined. Given the oppressive and institutionalised caste system in the Hindu society, American evangelical strategists chalked out plans for reaching these various "unmixable" caste groups. The many faultlines running through the country-divisions in terms of ethnicity, caste, creed, language and class-were all factored in during the generation of ethnographic data.

North India was designated the core target of American evangelists. It was described as the "core of the core of the core" of a worldwide evangelical movement conceived by fundamentalist American missionaries. This movement that took shape over the 1990s, has now taken off because of a unique collaboration between the American government and US-based evangelical mission agencies. In the 1990s this movement was shaped by the World Evangelical Fellowship (an international alliance of national evangelical alliances), working with the AD2000 movement. It brought together a wide variety of individuals and organisations, under the single goal of achieving "a church for every people and the gospel for every person by the year 2000." Its focus was missionary mobilisation and church planting in India and other regions of the world where the Christian population was negligible. This movement was also a massive intelligence gathering exercise funded and supported by American missionary organisations that were responsible for the election of George W Bush.

Global evangelism plans

AD2000 first attracted attention at a convention of international evangelical missions called Lausanne II in Manila in 1989. The movement then spread rapidly around the globe to help catalyse evangelism. The strategy behind the movement was to establish pioneering global partnerships to eventually provide a church within every "unreached people group". Ralph Winter, founder of the US Center for World Mission, characterised the movement as "the largest, most pervasive global evangelical network ever to exist."

This movement, spearheaded by Luis Bush from the movement's headquarters in Colorado Springs, US, was planned for large conversion of people living within the "10/40 Window". Incidentally, Billy Graham, a Christian fundamentalist and rabid evangelist, who was responsible for George W's "born again" Christian status and whom the president considers as his godfather was the honorary co-chairman of the AD 2000 movement.

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