CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

THE TOPIC: CONTEXT AND SIGNIFICANCE

1. The Topic and its Sociological Context

1.1 Religion

The popular impression about religion is that it is concerned with the supernatural only and has very little to do with the day-to-day life of man. A close examination will, however, reveal that this popular impression is not wholly correct. Though religion is a coherent system concerning the supernatural, this system has serious implications for the behaviour and welfare of its adherents. Religion becomes significant only when it meaningfully intervenes in the day-to-day life of man, especially in the miseries and afflictions of the society. Religion thus has an ideological and social dimension. Recognizing and emphasizing the social character of religion, Emile Durkheim saw the source of the ‘sacred’ to be the group itself, the society. The worship of God was seen by Durkheim as the disguised worship of the society, the great entity upon which the individual depended.

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Sociologists of religion like Betty Scharff, Bryan Wilson, Michael Hill, Thomas F. O'Dea and others have brought out the interrelation of religion and other social institutions.

In the contemporary era, role of religion as a principle agent of social change is well recognized. Assessing the situation of religion in America, Harper and Lebeau assert "The evidence is pervasive and clear, however, that religion has disappeared nowhere but changed everywhere." The words of William Sims Bainbridge is worth quoting in this context "Religions are human creations. Our society quite consciously tries to improve every other kind of social institution, why not religion? ... It is far better for honest religious engineers to undertake the creation of new religions for (the) sake of human betterment than to leave the task to madmen and wealth-hungry frauds." 

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1.2 Development

Different people understand the term 'development' differently. In its narrow sense, it means 'economic growth' or 'economic prosperity'. But in the broad sense, it refers to 'total development' encompassing the social, political, cultural, economic and spiritual well-being of the individuals in the society. Development should also be sustainable. "The newly independent nations in the 1950's and the UN development decades of the 1950's believed that development could be achieved by substantially measuring the growth rate. They believed that increase in national income, if faster than population growth, would bring about social and economic development. In practice, however the resulting emphasis and policies led to an increase of poverty, inequalities, illiteracy and unemployment. These made the leaders realize that improvement in the growth rate with out set changes to eliminate poverty, unemployment and inequalities would not bring about development."  

In spite of the massive development activities the number of hungry, unemployed houseless and illiterate continued to increase. This made the people to question the very concept of development.  

10 Ibid
In development dictionary Wolfang Sachs describes development “as a process through which the potentialities of an object or organism is released until it reaches its natural, complete and full-fledged form. Here the term is used as a metaphor to explain the natural growth of plants and animals. This is a philosophical and mechanical explanation of the concept of development.

Reiner Dale in his organizational development makes the concept of development more people oriented. According to him “development is a broad, more diverged concept denoting improvement in the quality life of people extending much beyond direct gains from increased production of commodities and services” So development is no more viewed as a process of economic growth but it is viewed as people themselves. “It is not only people having more but people being more; more just, more concerned, more co-operative more sharing and more human. Development is people involving in transforming themselves and in transforming the structures that dehumanize and oppress

12 Reider Dale, Organization of Development Sage Publication, New Delhi 2000, p- 17
them, so that they can have more and be more. It is in other words people regaining control over lives and destiny.\textsuperscript{13}

The Asian regional workshop on ‘people’s participation’ in development defines the development as “an integrated process with Economic social political cultural and moral aspects... a process of liberation of people from age old tradition and from exploitive system of society ... a continuing and universal process affecting all aspects of human life and all parts of society.”\textsuperscript{14}

For Kishore Saint, people based development is the self conscious, self planned, self reliant and sustainable progress of a community in all aspects of its life, functions and relation which leads it towards a more human existence in terms of the fullest flowering of the potentialities of its members and in terms of contribution towards cultural enrichment, peace and a viable future for all man kind”. \textsuperscript{15} The participants of the Algiers international symposium on new international economic order view development in the same manner. According to them “development is a process of profound structural change in the economic political social and cultural fields brought about by the people and for the people through mass participation and for the

\textsuperscript{13} Fe Joseph John Desorches, op. cit., p-6.
\textsuperscript{15} As quoted by Fe Joseph John Desorchers, op. cit., p-6.
benefit of the masses ... The purpose of which is to develop people, not to accumulate things.\textsuperscript{16}

From what has been said so far we can conclude two important characteristics of development. First, development is much more than economic growth. It should take into account many other factors such as social, political, cultural, spiritual etc. Second, development is people centered i.e. Genuine development should start with people i.e. their education, organization discipline etc. It should make the people aware of the root causes of the poverty and exploitation. It should make people confident of their potentialities, instill in them a sense of hope, establishes a value system, which can sustain the good fruits of development. In the economic field development should aim at attaining a decent economic standard and an equitable distribution of resources. In the social field development should aim at working for better standard in health and education as well as for the abolition of discrimination and in the political field, for participation in decisions that affect people's life.\textsuperscript{17}

In short "Development should be pursued as a multi dimensional process, involving the reorientation and reorganization of entire economic and social system. It involves

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid, p-9.
radical changes in the institutional, social and administrative structure as well as in popular attitudes and in many cases customs and beliefs structure as well in popular attitudes and in many cases customs and beliefs.\textsuperscript{18}

1.3 Community Development

Community development as a new concept gained prominence after the 2\textsuperscript{nd} World War. "It assumed urgency because of the necessity to take people into confidence, make the government more broad based, and ensure enlightened public participation in the affairs of the nation. This was the alternative to class struggle, resulting in mass upheaval and people's violent demand for their own well being. It is thus a substitute for bloody revolution, preaching class collaboration in place of class conflict."\textsuperscript{19} Community development demands the whole-hearted support of millions of people under the poverty line. It is these people, who have to plan and execute the programmes for their own well-being. It is the developmental programme rooted in human dignity and respect for individual. It advocates the method of persuasion rather than coercion.

Against the backdrop of the dynamic persistence of the religion today as an important agent of social change and growing

\textsuperscript{18}Kartar Singh, \textit{Rural development}, Sage publication, New Delhi, 1995, p-20.
awareness on the social dimensions of development, the topic of the study is entitled as **Church and Community Development: A Sociological study with reference to Bhimadole Community.** The Roman Catholic Church is the largest organized religion in the world with an estimated number of One Hundred and Ten crore members. But the church is concerned with entire humanity and not merely confined to its own members. The church has a universal outlook that goes beyond the barriers of caste, creed, religion, race and sex and embraces everything human. "All things human are our concern. We share with the whole of the human race a common nature, a common life with all its gifts and whole its problems. We are ready to play our part in this primary universal society... We are able to communicate with men\(^20\). Pope Paul VI in his apostolic exhortation *Evangeli Nuntiandi* reiterates that it is the fundamental duty of the church to intervene in the concrete life situation of man as part of its divine mission. "The Gospel has to be proclaimed in an actual situation, with attention to its implications for the reordering of society. A failure to accept the social implications of the Gospel would be a lack of responsiveness to the Gospel itself, and hence a defect of faith. Faith, if it is not to be merely nominal, involves a sincere adherence to the vision of the Kingdom of God that the Gospel holds forth to us – an adherence that reveals itself

\(^{20}\) Pope Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam*, n.97
concretely in the believer’s manner of living and of dealing with other persons and groups.”

The church is concerned with the development of all men and all dimension of human life. “The social concern of the church, directed toward an authentic development of man and society that would respect and promote all the dimensions of the human person, has always expressed itself in the most varied ways.” The church is concerned with the human miseries and problems of all time and supported the people in their problems. It has never hesitated to intervene in different issues that threatened humanity. Rather church considered it as her divine mission. “Amid the disturbances and uncertainties of the present hour, the Church has a specific message to proclaim and a support to give to men in their efforts to take in hand and give direction to their futures. Since the period in which the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* denounced in a forceful and imperative manner the scandal of the condition of the workers in the nascent industrial society, historical evolution has led to an awareness of other dimensions and other applications of social justice. The encyclicals *Quadragesimo Anno* and *Mater et Magistra* already noted this fact. The recent Council for its part took care to point them out, in particular in the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et

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21 *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n.9
22 Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, n.1
We ourselves have already continued these lines of thought in our encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, “Today,” we said, “the principal fact that we must all recognize is that the social question has become worldwide” (PP, n.3). A renewed consciousness of the demands of the gospel makes it the Church’s duty to put herself at the service of all, to help them grasp their serious problems in all its dimensions, and to convince them that solidarity in actions at this turning point in human history is a matter of urgency.”

In the papal exhortation of Pope Paul VI, it is reiterated that evangelization - propagation of faith - cannot be mere a matter of words or concepts. The Gospel has to be proclaimed in an actual situation, with attention to implications for the re-ordering of the society. A failure to accept the social implications of the Gospel would be a lack of responsiveness to Gospel itself and hence a defect of faith, if it is not to be merely nominal, involves a sincere adherence to the vision of the freedom of God that Gospel holds forth to us - an adherence that reveals itself concretely in the believer’s manner of living and dealing with other persons and groups.

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23 Pope Paul VI, *Octogesima Adveniens*, n.5
24 Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n.9
Another striking aspect of the social doctrine of the church is its interdisciplinary and dynamic character. It is not static or rigid; but very much dynamic. It adapts itself to the changing social, political and economic context. “In order better to incarnate the one truth about man in different and constantly changing social, economic and political contexts, this teaching enters into dialogue with the various disciplines concerned with man. It assimilates what these disciplines have to contribute, and helps them to open themselves to a broader horizon, aimed at serving the individual person who is acknowledged and loved in the fullness of his or her vocation. Parallel with the interdisciplinary aspect, mention should also be made of the practical and, as it were, experiential dimension of this teaching, which is to be found at the crossroads where Christian life and conscience come into contact with the real world. This teaching is seen in the efforts of individuals, families, people involved in cultural and social life, as well as politicians and statesmen to give it a concrete form and application in history.25

2. Relevance of the study

The church carries out extensive charitable and social works throughout the whole world. In India, even when the catholic population amounts to 2.5%, the church makes its presence felt

25 Pope John Paul II, Centesimus Annus, n.59
through its activities in the field of education, health, rural development etc. and runs many institutions to take care of the marginalized section of the society. The church served all the sections of the society, irrespective of caste, creed, religion, sex etc. The significant role of the church in the nation building is a well-established factor. The role of the church in the social and economic development of the nation, its tireless fight against the exploitation of the poor and downtrodden, its genuine attempts to bring the marginalized sections of the society to the main stream, its sincere works to eradicate social evils, especially superstitions and poverty were recognized by people and Government alike.

However in the changing socio-political scenario, the role of the church and motive behind the social and humanitarian activities of the church are not well taken. It is alleged that the church makes use of its social and humanitarian activities as a cover up for religious propagation. It is even said that the church exploits the poverty and miseries of the rural poor for evangelization.

The growing atrocities against Christians are a matter of great concern for the entire nation. Human Rights Watch, an organization working for the protection of human rights in its World Report 2001 noted that the attacks against the Christians
in India have increased significantly since 1988. On January 1999, in Manoharpur Village in Keonghir District, Orissa a mob of Hindu extremists burned to death an Australian missionary, Graham Stewart Staines and his two sons Phillip and Timothy as they slept in their car. Over one hundred people reportedly poured petrol on the Station wagon and set it on fire. As the family tried to escape the mob held them back and physically assaulted the villagers who tried to come to their rescue. Staines had worked for over 30 years in a leper colony in the state. The President of the Bajrang Dal, a militant Hindu Organization, alleged that Staines had been engaged in mass conversion rather than social work and helping lepers was a mere cover for his proselytizing activities. On September 1988 four nuns were gang raped in Jabua District, Madhya Pradesh. In the same year on March 25 in Bihar Luke Putaniyil of Missionaries of Charity was murdered near the state capital. On May 15 of the same year the Headmaster of a catholic school was attacked in Ranchi while in August a Catholic Church was demolished in Cobatoli Village in Gumla District, the same district where two catholic priests were murdered in 1996. On September 2, 1999, a gang of fifteen unidentified assailants in Keonjahir District of Orissa killed Rev. Arul Doss. The 'Indian currents' reports that Fr. A.T. Thomas, a Jesuit missionary was found dead in the jungles of Hazaribag.

26 Human Right Watch Report 2001 (June 13, 2005) www.yahoo.com
Bihar on October 28, 1997. The body had been chopped off its head. The brutal murder of Fr. Job Chittilapilly in Trichur District and attack on sisters of the Missionaries of Charity in Kozhikode District of Kerala state in August 2004 indicate the severity of the problem even in South India, where religious fanaticism is comparatively less.

Major allegations against the Christians are that they engage in conversion and all the welfare and humanitarian activities are just a cover for mass conversion. While releasing a book on Lakshman Madhav Inamdar, a distinguished volunteer of RSS on August 15, 2001, the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee said “there is a conversion motive behind the welfare activities carried out by some Christian missionaries in the country’s backward areas and it is not proper, though conversion is permissible under the law”. Another allegation is that the Christians destroy the culture and ethos of the country. On October 30, 1999 Mr. K.S. Sudarshan the RSS Chief asked Christians and Muslims to re-interpret their scriptures and change their leadership. He also observed that the Muslim and Christian leadership are in the hands of conflict mongers and made a plea

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27 Indian Currents, October 29, 1997, p-1
28 HRWF International Secretariat (December 03, 2001) < http://www.hrwf.net
to RSS cadres to arm themselves against any threat.\textsuperscript{29} In this socio-political context, it is relevant to expose the real motive behind the social and humanitarian activities of the church by analyzing the concept of development according to church. This can clarify the doubts raised from different quarters of the society. The words of former President of the country’s Catholic Bishop Conference, Arch Bishop Cyril Mar Baselios are worth quoting “Christianity, especially Catholicism posed no challenge or threat to Indian cultural or ethos. On the contrary it is an enriching factor. Over centuries the church has shown that it can co-exist harmoniously with the Indian culture.”\textsuperscript{30}

Christianity and Catholicism have contributed much to national integration and integrated development of all sections of the society. The very motto of the church is ‘the development of the whole man and each man’. \textsuperscript{31} The church through its activities reaches to all aspects of the life of man i.e., social, moral, political, economical, educational, health etc. Caste conflicts and caste related violence is a social stigma, which blocks the development of the people of India. The church through its activities proclaims authentic and true ‘humanism’ and contributed much to reduce the difference between different

\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Attacks on Christians in India on the Rise, New Delhi, India. Dec.1. 2001 (June 30, 2005) <http://www.yahoo.com}}

\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Ibid}}

\textsuperscript{31} Pope Jon Paul II, \textit{Ecclesia in Africa, n.68}
caste groups, which haunts the Indian society from time immemorial. The developmental activities of Church in Bhimadole are an explicit proof for the same.

Bhimadole Mandal belongs to the West Godhawari District of Andhra state. It is a cluster of thirty villages, which is a socially and economically backward area, where the church takes a lot of development activities through its organization namely Bhimadole Development Society (BDS). Pilot study revealed that developmental activities of the church are chalked out and executed in such a way that the maximum participation of the villagers is ensured. The programmes are multifaceted so that it covers all aspects of their life. Caste conflicts and caste related violence are common in this area as any other part of Andhra Pradesh. The study aims to examine how far the church could translate into concrete action its idea of authentic human development and how far its activities could reduce the difference between different caste groups of the area.

CONCLUSION

The dynamic persistence of religion today, the growing awareness of the social dimension of development, role of Catholic Church - the largest organized religion in the world - as one of the principal agents of social change, the dynamic and
interdisciplinary character of the social doctrine of the church, the controversies arose with regard to the activities of the church in the present socio-political scenario of India makes the study socially relevant and academically rewarding.