<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>The Pluralistic situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Conventional Missionary approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Meaning of Conversion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.1</td>
<td>Conversion: Hindu perception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.2</td>
<td>Conversion: Christian understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Conversion - Changing Christian perception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>Niyogi commission report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>Christian mission activities: The present scenario</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8.1</td>
<td>From western to indigenous missions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8.2</td>
<td>The contemporary situation: An Overview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8.3</td>
<td>Evangelization crusades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>Why Christian mission groups are concentrating their activities in North India’s tribal belt?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9.1</td>
<td>The agenda of Christian missions working in parts of Orissa and Madhya Pradesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>Mission activities in the tribal villages of Baster, Bilaspur and Raipur of Madhya Pradesh, Raigada and Phulbani of Orissa: Findings of the case studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10.1</td>
<td>IET and their main activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10.2</td>
<td>The various ministries of IET and how they work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i)</td>
<td>Church planting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii)</td>
<td>Bible training centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii)</td>
<td>Village evangelism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iv)</td>
<td>Film ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(v)</td>
<td>Schools and children homes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(vi)</td>
<td>Counselling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10.3</td>
<td>IEHC and their main activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i)</td>
<td>Bible correspondence course (BCC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii)</td>
<td>Christ groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii)</td>
<td>Church planters training institute (CPTI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iv)</td>
<td>Adult literary programme (ALP)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.10.4 IEM and their main activities

(i) Village evangelism
(ii) Community health care work.

2.11 Why tribals and the backward classes are attracted to Christianity?

2.12 Why Hindu groups oppose Christian missionary activities?
CHAPTER TWO
CHRISTIAN MISSIONS IN THE CONTEMPORARY SITUATION OF INDIA

2.1 Background

It is a fact that there is a revival of religious communalism and communal politics in India today, which often gets erupted into communal violence. It has been complained that the minority communities especially the Christians and Muslims in Indian society feel insecure. At times it seems that the tensions between the majority and minorities are going to destroy the very foundation of the existence of India as a nation and a nation state. Indian politicians and political parties too indulge in communal politics. All those who are concerned about the future of the country are called upon to address the issue of communal clashes and suggest ways for religions to conduct themselves in the pluralistic situation of India.

One of the basic facts to be taken into consideration is that Indian society is multi-religious and multi-cultural. The plurality of religious faiths has produced a diversity of communities with separate and distinctive identities, each religious community having its own creed, cult, pattern of conduct and culture. Each community has developed its own socio-political interests and this has often resulted in rivalry and inter-religious conflicts. This does not mean either that
plurality of faith is bad or that religions stand in the way of communal harmony. It is true that religions have become a source of strife in several parts of the world including India. But religions, if properly understood and followed can instead of disrupting inter-religious harmony, provide spiritual motivation towards building communal harmony.

During recent times Christians have been criticised for hampering peace and harmony in different parts of India. Some prominent Hindu leaders like the RSS chief Sudarshan alleged that Christian missions are indulging in forceful conversions of vulnerable sections in the Hindu community. Though Christian missions have denied the charges, atrocities against Christian community on the charge of coercive conversion from Hinduism to Christianity have created an unprecedented wedge in Indian society and polity. Most Christians think that violence against them has the tacit approval of the communal political party that controls the levers of power at the national level. It has to be admitted that historically Christianity has contributed to the rise of communalism and inter-religious rivalry in India. Wrong interpretations and practices of Christ’s teachings followed by Christian missions and also certain formulations of Christian missiological concepts have produced narrow communalistic and exclusivist forms of Christianity, seeking to dominate over and displace other religions. The eighteenth and nineteenth century missionary movement had been an amorphous mixture of self-less service and a crusading spirit of expansion. It resulted in reproducing western model of Christianity in India. There were
cases of voluntary conversion. But mere proselytism or formal change of religion was the order of the day. Another irritant was that Christianity in India came to be viewed with suspicion and mistrust because of the association of Christian missions with the colonial and imperialist powers. The attempt to build a theology for the missions in consonance with the expansionist spirit also contributed to further complication. For example, the well-known theologian and missiologist Hendrik Kraemer in his famous address to the International Missionary Conference at Tambaram on the theme ‘Christian message in a non-Christian World’ emphasised the uniqueness of Christ, the necessity of the Church, and the obligation to proclaim the gospel to the whole world. Kraemer’s interpretation made a negative judgment on native religions claiming his religion to be the right and the best one. This became the basis for Christian missionary approach to other faiths and resulted in a narrow and exclusivist approach to other religions in India.

2.2 The pluralistic situation

Pluralism in a society is the presence of more than one cultural identity among its population. It can be multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-lingual and other multi-cultural identities. It has been pointed out that, India is the world’s most complex and comprehensive pluralistic society harbouring a vast variety of races, castes, communities, languages, customs and living styles.

---

In a pluralistic situation it is possible for people either to build spiritual walls within which they may live in isolation from one another or to follow the path of aggression with a view to dominating others. Needless to say both these are not healthy attitudes. The only creative way out for humankind in the modern context of pluralism is; “for each religion, culture and ideology to recognize that people are in a situation of dialogical existence, and to explore the possibility of cooperation and pro-existence, without in the process losing its own ultimate spiritual basis”\(^2\).

Of course, the fact of religious pluralism raises many questions. Why so many different religions? What ought to be one’s attitude towards other religions? Are all religions essentially the same or different? Such questions abound in a pluralistic situation.

Harold G. Coward opines that, religious pluralism is a special challenge facing world religions today\(^3\). As such religious pluralism is not a threat in itself. It is only when religions try to become exclusivist that problems arise. John Hick argues that, this basic conviction is to hold that, one particular religion contains the valid response to the divine. It alone holds the true beliefs concerning the nature of reality\(^4\).

---

Paul F. Knitter observes that, one of the most pressing tasks confronting Christian theology today is of providing an account of existence and the renewed vitality of other religions\(^5\). Kuncheria Pathil too notes that, the discovery of other faiths and the question of their role in the universal salvific plan of God is the most serious challenge to contemporary Christian theology\(^6\).

In India there are a number of religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism, Islam and Christianity. In addition to this there are also a variety of folk religions and tribal cultures. The diversity of expressions of the Christian faith also contributes to the pluralistic situation.

There was a time when Christianity held the view that there was no salvation outside the church. But today that position has been discarded by almost all established churches. They have learned to see truth and positive values in other faiths. There has also been a shift taking place in the conceptual understanding of church, and its mission in the world which is essentially pluralistic. Churches have understood that the colonial model of “imposition of one belief or ideology” on all people is no longer feasible. It is all the more applicable in the present socio-political situation of India. Hence search for a new models of


Christian mission activities by taking seriously the challenges posed by the pluralistic situation of India is felt to be a pressing need of the time.

### 2.3 Mission

The word mission is derived from the Latin word *Missio* which means send. In church circles *missio Dei* is the term used to denote mission. It treats mission as God’s mission\(^7\). Christians believe that it is for the accomplishment of God’s mission that Jesus came. Christian mission is, therefore, participation in God’s mission as exemplified in the life and ministry of Jesus.

For grasping the nature and meaning of mission, Jesus’ own interpretation of mission is to be evaluated. Jesus began his ministry by announcing the arrival of the Kingdom (St. Mark. 1:14-15). The Kingdom of God is foundational to Jesus’ mission. Further he narrates what is mission in what is known as the Nazareth Manifesto (St. Luke 4:18-19). According to the Nazareth Manifesto, God’s mission through Jesus Christ was good news to the poor, liberation from all forms of oppression and bondage and proclamation of the year of Lord’s favour. The year of Lord’s favour has reference to the jubilee year as described in chapter 25 of the book of Leviticus in the Old Testament which had been meant for the removal of all inequalities and the restoration of all to their ancestral family properties. Slaves were to be liberated and

\(^7\) Ken Gnanakan, *Kingdom Concerns* (Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 1993) 35.
debts were to be cancelled. The accent in Jesus’ interpretation of mission was on liberation from oppression and the removal of all forms of dehumanisation and the restoration of justice for all. The goal of mission, is thus, made unequivocally clear. God’s Mission in Christ is not simply the conversion of individuals but the transformation of the corporate life of the whole community. For Jesus, God’s reign is the starting point and context for mission.

Most Christian mission groups and societies proclaim mission as God’s and for them it extends to the whole of God’s creation. It is not limited to one particular issue, community or religion. In a religiously plural society Christians together with their neighbours of other faiths, are called upon to participate in God’s mission in the world. As S. J. Samartha says: “Mission is continuing activity through the spirit to mend the brokenness of creation to overcome the fragmentation of humanity and to heal rift between humanity, nature and God”.

2.4 Conventional missionary approach

The traditional view of mission consisted exclusively in preaching or spreading of the gospel, planting as many churches as possible and persuading native people to renounce their traditional religious affiliations and socio-cultural practices and to become ‘true’

---

9 S.J. Samartha, One Christ – Many Religions (Bangalore: SATHRI, 1994) 170.
Christians. ‘True’ here meant a westernised gentleman type. The image of Christ, which such missionary enterprises projected, was that of the crusading or imperial Christ out to conquer the world rather than that of God’s servant Christ of the gospel always willing and eager to serve than to be served. Emperor Constantine’s decision to give Christianity the status of official religion of the empire distorted the servant image of Christ and replaced it with Christ ‘Rex’.

The Church and its mission never fully recovered from the Constantinian distortion. The Protestants also maintained the same tradition. Whereas the Roman Catholic Church affirmed that there was no salvation outside the ‘Church’ the protestant model was that, outside the ‘Word’ there was no salvation. The links maintained by Christian missions with the project of colonial expansion of the European nations further vitiated the relationship between Christian missions and the cultures of the people ‘evangelised’.

2.5 Meaning of conversion

Latin word conversio, which is the etymological root of the word conversion, means turning from carelessness to true piety. The primary Biblical view of conversion is a change or turning around towards God. Conversion is a new orientation to the new way in contrast to the old; a turning around in a mental sense or the more literally used

---

11 Ibid.
physical sense. Arthur Darby Nock defines conversion as; “individual experimental phenomenon, chosen to belong to a new faith because of personal spiritual conviction”.

Bailey says, conversions are not confined to Christian religion. The process is the same in all religions. First recognition of the reality in personal idealism, then decision-acceptance and finally awakened creative activity. The principle of assimilation seems to be active throughout the conversion process.

In theoretical terms mission and conversion may be legitimate terms in the practice of religious faiths. Without conversion there would have been no organised religions-no Buddhism or Jainism and later on Sikhism in India, and no Christianity emerging out of Judaism in the first century. There have been Buddhist missions to Sri Lanka, Burma, and Thailand besides the whole of India. In India Hindu Gurus had Muslim disciples and Sufi saints had Hindu disciples. Religious refugees came and lived among Hindus without being disturbed either way in terms of faith. They were not alienated from their own culture and community life.

Contrary to this, Christian missionary

---

14 Bailey Gillespie, op.cit. : 16.
15 Ibid. : 136.
16 Tara Chand, Short History of the Indian People (Calcutta: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1934) 64 - 65.
17 Samarth, op.cit: 169.
activities had made a disturbing and destabilising effect on the life of the society.

2.5.1 Conversion: Hindu perception

In Hinduism, religion is regarded as a matter of ‘spiritual experience’. Consequently in none of its forms has Hinduism ever developed the idea of a community of believers\textsuperscript{19}. Therefore, in Hinduism there can be no such thing as conversion. Spiritual enlightenment is realised through disciplined living, in a mystic union with the absolute\textsuperscript{20}. The position of Hinduism vis-à-vis conversion underwent a fundamental change during the last part of the nineteenth century. In response to the mass proselytizing attempts by Christian missions, the Arya Samaj introduced what is known as Suddhi-or reconversion of the converted Hindus back into their original Hindu faith. It has been pointed out by analysts that this is not in keeping with the Hindu ethos and might eventually lead to a sort of semitisation of Hinduism\textsuperscript{21}.

2.5.2 Conversion: Christian understanding

Christian conversion, in essence, means experiencing God as one’s innermost reality through the help-mediation-of Jesus and reorienting one’s life in terms of that experience\textsuperscript{22}. For some conversion

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid. : 17.
\textsuperscript{22} K.P. Aleaz, The Role of Pramanas in Hindu–Christian Epistemology (Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1993) 85.
is a supernatural event beginning to totally transform the personality (mind, emotion, self-perception, etc.) of the person(s) concerned and thereby producing a different understanding of ultimate reality, along with new beliefs, and norms of conduct. It involves a change in beliefs, group identifications and characteristics of personality; it also involves a complete reorganisation and reorientation in a person’s emotional conditions and intellectual outlook.23

2.6 Conversion -Changing Christian perception

Christian perception of the idea of conversion has undergone a process of revolution over the years. In the beginning Christians had thought it their God given duty to convert as many as possible. But the exposure to other religions and cultures prompted and compelled them to re-examine their views on conversion; and they did it earnestly and in depth. It resulted in giving up the old notions and accepting a liberal view that accommodated other religions also as a valid means for God-realisation. This change of perception is reflected in the writings of many Christian thinkers and theologians For example Wesley Ariarajha who was Director of the Dialogue unit of WCC24 commented that Christians should consider religious plurality to be within God’s purpose and pointed out that; “The Christian is called not to convert, but to witness. The burden of responding to the message is that of the hearers and not of those

---

23 Ibid.: 85-86.
24 The WCC has a special department designed as unit for holding dialogue with other religions and other Christian denominations who are not members of the WCC.
who proclaim”25. The Canberra Assembly of the WCC pointed to the need of Christ to be presented, interpreted and lived out in relation to indigenous spirituality26. A new holistic humanism integrating the mechanical materialistic, the organic ecological and the spiritual personal dimensions of human being has to emerge through dialogue between religions and secular ideologies and between religions27.

Kuncheria Pathil says, an attempt to change the social system along with mission is an important ideal today28. To this Dick Kooiman adds:

“Conversion in India should not be narrowed down to an individual moment of divine grace or a Gandhian change of heart; it is closely linked with social aspirations of groups that suffer from discrimination and oppression. For untouchable castes and communities a change of religion may serve as an idiom of social mobility”29.

In Dick Kooiman’s view conversion has a personal as well as social aspect. On the other hand K.C. Vardhachari says: “Conversion is not an experience that entails the cutting of from the rest of the society

26 Ibid. : 124.
27 Ibid. : 126.
to which one belonged, either to enter into another community or into his own solitariness for all religious experience”\textsuperscript{30}. It consists in a double movement- turning away from love of oneself and turning to love of God. This love of God is correctly manifested in the love of the other. Love of the other takes particular care of the poor, unwanted and the oppressed. It promotes justice. It seeks to change the hearts and the structures that are causes of injustice and oppression\textsuperscript{31}.

K.C. Abraham says that the earlier approach of mission was evangelism and conversion, but with the impact of religious resurgence, nationalism, ecumenism, globalisation and the threat posed by scientific and technological advancement, the boundaries of mission expanded. Today human society as a corporate unit, come in the orbit of Christian missions. The concern of social problems and the liberation from unjust structures have become part of Churches mission\textsuperscript{32}.

NCCI the official forum of the non-catholic Churches in India also support the above view. It says:

“Christianity in India does not need more members. Numerical growth of the membership of the church has not brought any significant change in the life of the society. It is a small


minority within the Church, who, in the spirit of Christ ventures out to spread the good news through their humble life-style and service”\textsuperscript{33}.

Though Churches do not support proselytizing efforts, many criticisms raised against Christian missions working in various parts of India are not without ground. In the multi-faith situation of India many of the conventional forms of Christian missions have to be changed if they are to be accepted.

The above cited views point to the imperative need for deepening our understanding of the basic postulates of all major religions and taking a critical look at the mission activities as we see them in today’s India.

2.7 Niyogi commission report

It was against the background of strong anti-conversion sentiments brewing up all through the country that in 1954, the Madhya Pradesh government appointed a committee to investigate the charges of forced and coercive conversion into Christianity followed by Christian missions in the state particularly among the backward peoples and aboriginals. M.B. Niyogi a retired Chief Justice of Nagpur High court headed the Christian Missionary Activities Inquiry Committee. The committee published its findings in 1956.

\hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{33} S.K. Parmer, “Missiological function of the Church in India”, \textit{NCCR} Vol. CVII, No.4 April (1987): 219-220.
The conclusions of the Niyogi Commission are noteworthy. Some of the major complaints raised against Christian missions were that through the initiative of International Missionary Council, foreign missionary organisations using foreign money are doing mass conversion by means of educational, medical and evangelistic work. Conversions were mostly brought about by undue influences, misrepresentation etc. or in other words not by conviction but by inducements. Educational concessions such as free gifts of books were offered to secure the conversion of minors in the primary and secondary schools under the control of missions. They also used mass media for conversion. Missionaries also involved themselves in extra religious and political activities. Loyalty to the country and solidarity of society were weakened and disrupted by conversion. Evangelism was a world policy to revive Christendom by re-establishing western supremacy and was not prompted by spiritual motives. Schools, Hospitals and orphanages were used as means to facilitate proselytism. Harijans and tribals were the special target of an aggressive evangelization. The committee recommended legislative measures to prevent conversions. The main recommendations of the committee were like i) those missionaries whose primary object was proselytization should be asked to withdraw, ii) the use of medical or other professional services as a direct means of

making conversions should be prohibited by law\textsuperscript{36}. The report while disapproving proselytization, appreciated the educational and medical services rendered by Christian missions\textsuperscript{37}.

The response of the Christian Churches to the report was, of course, mixed. But by any reckoning, the Niyogi Commission report was an indictment against Christian mission activities in India\textsuperscript{38}.

2.8 Christian mission activities: The present scenario

2.8.1 From western to indigenous missions

As pointed out earlier during the first phase of the missionary movement the thrust was in replicating the western model of Christian life in India. Establishment of an indigenous Indian Church was not on their agenda; their aim was to save the souls from heathenism\textsuperscript{39}. Missions evaluated their success merely on baptismal statistics rather than making converts genuine Christians. The foreign missionaries dominated the mission affairs. Michel Hollis pointed to this fact in the following words: “It was assumed that any missionary however junior and inexperienced, might be put in charge of any work. It was equally

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{36} Blaise Levai, op.cit: 276.
  \item \textsuperscript{37} Ka Na Subramanyam, Catholic Community in India (Calcutta: Macmillan, 1970) 72.
  \item \textsuperscript{38} Editorial Notes “The Niyogi Recommendations”, NCCR Vol.LXXVI/10, October (1956): 368.
\end{itemize}
assumed that he must be in charge, unless a senior missionary was there under whom he could work”\textsuperscript{40}.

There was little consciousness or help for growth or hardly any effort to develop an indigenous ministry. Institutions and organisations were built with the financial assistance of Western Missionary Society without depending upon to the economic resources of Indian Christians. The Indian teachers and catechists were considered only as “native agents of Missions”. Undue interference and dependence made the Indian Christian community to remain a potted plant alienated from the common soil of Indian society.

Knowing this drawback of excessive dependence on western patronage and their control over Indian mission affairs, many educated native Christians began to show feelings of discontent, suspicion and dislike towards European missionaries. By the end of the nineteenth century there were efforts from the side of some leading native Christians to build up a self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating mission. Kalicharan Banerjee, Parani Andi, V.S. Azariah, and K.T Paul were the pioneers to claim this Christian liberty to stand aloof from western cultural domination and reformulate indigenous mission in relation to the cultural heritage of this land. The National Church of Madras (1886), The Christo Samaj of Culcutta (1887), The Marthoma

\textsuperscript{40} A.M. Mundadan, \textit{Indian Christians Search for Identity and Struggle for Autonomy} (Bangalore: Dharamaram Publications, 1984) 168.
Evangelical Association of Kerala (1888) the Hindu Church of the Lord Jesus in Tinnevelly (1903) were first attempts by Indian Christian community to create indigenous missions.\footnote{Kaj Baago, 	extit{Pioneers of Indigenous Christianity} (Madras: CISRS &CLS, 1969) 1-11.}

Two major institutional expressions of indigenisation among the Protestant in the twentieth century are the NMS and the Christian Ashram Movement. The NMS was organised in 1905 by V.S Azariah, KT. Paul and others out of their belief that Indian Christians should have a share of their own in the evangelization of the country. Its objectives were to evangelise unevangelised areas in India and adjacent countries and to stimulate missionary zeal in the churches.\footnote{C.B. Firth, 	extit{An Introduction to Indian Church History} (New Delhi: ISPCK, 1998) 254.} It was staffed by Indians, financed from Indian sources and organised on inter-denominational basis. The native Christian leaders saw in NMS the beginning of a movement that might break the mission compound mentality of a Indian Christians and help to organise the Indian Christians community along indigenous lines.\footnote{H.C. Perumalil & E.R. Hambye, op.cit. : 288.}

The Ashram is a very ancient institution in Indian religious tradition. Meditation and silence form the main features of it. As the idea of a life of withdrawal and meditation is part of Indian spiritual

\textsuperscript{*} Mission Compound Mentality literally means Christian converts shutting themselves in Mission Bungalow of a missionary probably a foreign missionary surrounded themselves with a few submissive mission dependents.
tradition it is quite familiar to the Indian mind and therefore it has considerable popular appeal. The common element in these Ashrams is a simple community life of an Indian type with a regular provision for prayers and devotion and members giving their service in schools or hospital and doing community work. Ashram movement among the Christian community in India is of fairly recent origin and there are several ashrams under different denomination in different parts of India. The Indian Christians who were looking for ways of Christian witness and service in keeping with the tradition of Indian spirituality found an answer in the Ashram way of life and work. The year 1921 saw the beginning of a Christu Seva Sangham Ashram in Pune by Fr. J.C. Winslow, Christu Sishya Ashram at Thadakoum by Bishop Pakenham Walsh.

Indigenous missions had a great vision about mission work. But unfortunately they could not develop into a great movement due to various reasons, particularly the lack of committed leaders. Many societies died a quiet death, others defunct, though existing only in name. It is into this gap that the aggressive evangelizing mission groups stepped in.

2.8.2 The contemporary situation: An overview

As per Indian Missions Association statistics there are nearly 100 mission groups working in different parts of India. Most of them

---

are Pentecostals who are breakaway groups from mainstream Churches. Their declared objective is evangelization of India. These groups get substantial amount of money from foreign countries as aid. The mission activities of these groups can be divided into three categories. (1) Religious (2) Social (3) Humanitarian. The Religious activities are personal evangelism, village evangelism, gospel crusades, film ministry, distribution of Bible, and training of missionaries, conducting retreats and counselling and planting Churches. Social activities include starting educational and vocational schools, distribution of medical aid, establishing orphanages, organising adult literacy programmes, running children and girls hostel, and providing sponsorship for clothes, housing, education and medical care to children and widows. Humanitarian activities include providing funds for relief (food, clothes, hut building) to people affected by natural calamities, cattle for the poor, helping villagers in income generating projects like fishery, community health programme like eye clinic, immunization, family planning, disease control. The tribals and low caste Hindus are attracted towards such mission activities. In many cases the poor and the out castes embrace Christianity not because of any spiritual motivation but for social and economic betterment. Hindu militant groups allege that, Christian missions through their social and charitable activities are weaning large number of gullible people from the Hindu community and that this is done with the help of foreign funds. To counter this, Hindu groups too started emulating the welfare programmes of Christian missions saying that the mission activities are
a threat to their religion and culture. Evangelizing Christian groups on the other hand allege that after Hindutva forces-read BJP-took control of the government of India there has been a conscious effort to curtail the religious freedom assured by the Indian constitution. There is even clamour for a ban on conversion activities. But the fact is that, activities of the fast multiplying Evangelizing Christian groups all over India give a handle to the Hindutva organisations to attack Christians and oppose all kinds of mission activities vehemently.

2.8.3 Evangelization crusades

Evangelization of India is often spoken of as the ‘Unfinished task’\textsuperscript{45} by the Catholic, Protestant churches and also Pentecostal groups. Evangelization crusades have been launched under various name like Evangelization 2000, Evangelization Decade, Operation World, AD 2000 & Beyond, by different Churches and Christian organisations internationally to carry on massive proselytization of non-Christians keeping 2000 AD as target year. Even the Roman Catholic Church seems to be in line, going by what their Pontiff states:

“As the year 2000 approaches, our world feels an urgent need for Gospel. Perhaps we feel this need precisely because the world seems to be distancing itself from the Gospel, or rather because the world has not yet drawn near to the Gospel. The first case-the move away from this Gospel-is particularly true

\textsuperscript{45} Louis Bush “Project North West 2000-AD 2000 and Beyond” Published by Church Growth Monitoring Cell, Operation Agape, Ludhiana 2000: 1-11.
of the “old world”, especially of Europe; the second is true of Asia, the far east and Africa.46

Christian evangelical and Pentecostal groups based mainly in the US and who have established an insistent presence in India see the whole India as a vast over-ripe harvest field. They send urgent calls through pamphlets and news bulletins to ‘reap the harvest before it is too late’. These Christian organisations have a list of villages ‘that are eagerly waiting for the Gospel’. They have projects and goals like ‘adopt your own village in India’, ‘plant a Church a Day’, plant 100 village churches by 2000 and seek sponsors in India and abroad for church planting. These fast multiplying Christian sects, most of them having their financial and ideological roots in the US, are now attempting to become the prime proselytisers. Their intolerant attitude to local cultures, to other religions in India, their aims and methods, the languages they use are understandably perceived as challenge to Hindu cultural identities. Hindu fundamentalist groups feel it their duty to resist these Christian groups nibbling at the Hindu society. This often results in communal tensions at different part of the country.47

To counter the Christian evangelization attempts are made to bring back converted Hindus back to the Hindu fold. Serious apprehensions are expressed by well-meaning persons, as is evidenced

46 John Paul II, Crossing the Threshold of Hope Translated by Messori Vittorio (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994) 117.
by the spurt of critiques on evangelization. The Hindu nationalist apprehension can be summoned as: “evangelization in India appears to be a part of the uniform world policy to revive Christendom for re-establishing western supremacy or that the objective is apparently to create Christian minority pockets with a view to disrupt the solidarity of the non-Christian societies”\textsuperscript{48}.

\section*{2.9 Why Christian mission groups are concentrating their activities in North India’s tribal belt?}

A glance at the demographic profile of the Christian population in India will be of some practical value here. The national average of Christians is officially 2.34\% according to 1991 census. IMA\textsuperscript{49} says the Christian population of North India is 0.55\% of the total population. Missionaries both within and outside India have long noticed the meagre and disorganised Christian presence in North India’s Hindi belt even after 200 years of active Christian evangelization. This enthused every evangelical missionary movement to plant church among every unreached people group as part of world evangelization movement.

Secondly Christian missions place the tribal belt of North-India within the ‘unfinished task’ of evangelization. AD 2000 & Beyond is the world wide evangelical movement which co-ordinates the work on

\begin{footnotes}
\item[48] Solomon Dorai Swamy, \textit{Christianity in India} (Madras: CLS, 1985) 99.
\item[49] IMA is a Christian agency founded in 1977 in order to co-ordinate and provides status of Christian work among unreached Dalit groups in India. I.M.A research team follows sources in the volumes of “People of India” by K.S. Singh.
\end{footnotes}
such areas of the world where people have not come under the influence of the gospel. Among the unreached people of the world, North India’s Hindi belt is focused as a core area. Every evangelical group is activated to take part in the great unfinished task of world evangelization by forming a Church for every people and the Gospel for every person by the year 2000.\(^\text{50}\)

Thirdly this area of India is also known as the heart land of Hinduism. It is the birthplace of both Buddhism and Jainism. Some of the most revered Hindu and Buddhist shrines and places of pilgrimage are in this region. Muslims too have a strong presence with some of their most important worship centres. To a missionary enthusiast the Hindu teachings and the Hindu world are the most perverted, most monstrous, most implacable, and this part of the world is the demon invaded part of this planet. The cure and remedy of this disorder is the light of gospel for them. Hence Church planting efforts are accentuated to save Hindu soul, from perishing.

Fourthly this is one of the most illiterate regions of the world. 40% of the total Indian population lives here. According to IMA research statistics the conditions of health, education, diet and drinking water among this regions’ backward class people are rated as poor. This area is also the most socially backward in all of India. This social

\(^{50}\) Refer JET SILVER JUBILEE SOUVENIR: 10-12 & It is Happening (Published by GFA) “Spiritual Awakening in the Hindi Belt”, March/April 1997, It is Happening “Renaissance in the Graveyard of Missions”, March 1996.
backwardness opens up opportunities for missions to work among the deprived classes and for their socio-economic cultural and educational development and through that spread the massage of the gospel and eventually conversion.

2.9.1 The agenda of Christian missions working in parts of Orissa and Madhya Pradesh.

With a view to investigate the working of Christian missions, the states of Madhya Pradesh and Orissa are selected for case study because these are the two regions where the largest number of evangelical/mission groups are making concerted efforts at proselytization. The reason why they concentrate on these regions is nothing but the fact that these are the most backward regions in India economically and socially. IET, FMPB, GFA, IPC, AG, Christ for India, IEHC, OM, South India Soul Winners Association, NMS, Brethren Missionary Society, IEM, CNI, Gossner Evangelical Lutheran Church, India Outreach Mission, India Campus Crusade for Christ, Evangelical Church of India, Baptist Church, New life Ministry, The Village Evangelization of Indian Mission etc. are some of the prominent Mission groups and churches active in the area.

During last few years local churches and evangelical organisations are making combined efforts to reach out to 6,00,000 of Indian villages with gospel with nearly 200 plans for Evangelization of India focusing the year 2000. The American organisation AD 2000 & Beyond co-ordinates the whole evangelization activity terming it as
‘The Unfinished Task’ igniting every missionary heart with the goal: ‘a church for every people and the Gospel for every person’. Planting ‘a church for every people’ is a task that is already well underway by some evangelical groups who envisage evangelization of India. The following evangelical groups have taken the challenge for evangelizing India.

a) FMPB has developed ‘Hindi Heart land penetration strategies to mobilise 1500 new missionaries to reach and evangelise 300 unreached people groups before the year 2003.

b) The GFA has a Church planting movement targeting the un reached in Asia. They are sending out 1,00,000 workers into the ripe harvest fields of Asia from 28 training centres by AD 2000.

c) The IEHC have a plan called ‘Final Thrust-5000’ which is to saturate India with the Gospel with the aim of planting village churches (Christ groups) at least in half of India’s 6,00,000 of villages by 2000 AD through native missionaries of 5000.

d) Christ for India is an evangelical group, which fund and oversee a daily evangelism and church planting work to the unreached

---

51 Friends Focus Published by FMPB September 1999. & It is Happening “Reaping a Bountiful Harvest Field”, July/ August 1996
52 It is Happening Editorial May/June 1996. & It is Happening “Penetrating the Impenetrable Kingdom”, January/ February 1997
villages of India. Their goal is to ‘plant a church a day’ targeting 4,80,000 unreached villages in India\textsuperscript{54}.

e) OM India has launched an initiative called ‘project Light’ to present the gospel through literature to 100 million people in India by the year 2000.

f) IET is the largest indigenous church-planting mission in India. It has mission fields in all over North India and had claimed planting 2000 Churches by 2000 A.D. Now they aim at planting 7777 churches by 2010 AD as their millennium vision\textsuperscript{55}.

2.10 Mission activities in the tribal villages of Bastar, Bilaspur and Raipur of Madhya Pradesh Raigada and Phulbani of Orissa: Findings of the case studies

Madhya Pradesh and Orissa are states where religious conversions are banned by law. Converts can be baptized only with the permission of the Magistrate. Though baptisms are restricted considerable number of tribal people join to mainstream churches and evangelical fellowships without registering their change in faith. It is seen that there is a substantial increase in the number of believers at every fellowships. But some groups have reported depletion in numbers


of conversions due to opposition from Hindu organisations and missions during last 2 or 3 years.

The villages of this region are tribal dominated, underdeveloped and illiterate. The villagers show more interest in wandering in forest and tending the cattle. They depend on agriculture for their living. Most of them are bonded labourers. The children scarcely go to school. Some missions run schools and children-homes and poor tribals send their wards to mission institutions. The IET mission runs a children’s home in Bastar and 200 children are given free education and other facilities. Most children in the villages suffer from malnutrition and infant death rate is very high in these villages. Child mortality per 1000 birth is 200 in Phulbani district and 133 in Koraput district of Orissa56. Hospitals run by Gossner Mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and Catholic mission are the medical agencies for relief of the sick. Fatal epidemic like diarrhoea, jaundice and brain fever are frequent ailments in these tribal villages. The tribal villages practice witchcraft and many people approach traditional village healers for curing ailments.

Though the educational institutions and hospitals managed by Christian missions are used by all sections of people including the higher caste Hindus, they oppose what may be called religious activities by these Christian groups. The general mood prevailing in

56 IMA People Profile Volume III Orissa, 1995: 34.
the villages is against conversion. It was reported that converted Christian tribals were tortured by Hindu zealots and locked up by police on false complaints. Some mission groups have trained native people as evangelists through their Bible Training schools for propagating gospel to non-Christians. Conducting open air preaching, praying for divine healing, conducting Sunday school classes, distribution of Gospel tracts, Bible portion and conducting prayer cells are some of their activities. In certain interior villages these evangelists conduct evangelistic meeting and show gospel films. Often this has led to sporadic persecution of missionaries and mob attacks on prayer meeting by Hindu militant groups chanting their opposition to Christianity calling it ‘foreign religion’.

Unlike the mainstream churches in India these evangelical groups do not have the support of any mainstream political parties, religious or socio-cultural organisations. Most of them are breakaway factions from the mainstream churches. These groups float fellowships, gather some illiterate people, photograph and videotape them and send them abroad seeking funds. Refuting allegations of spiritual seductions by way of finance, most of the evangelical pastors say that they preach, but don’t induce. They help people financially, some people join but many don’t. It was said that no particular group is targeted. The claim that Brahmans and Muslims were among those converted was found to be untrue. Similarly the claim of an alarming number of people accepting Christianity is also not borne out by facts. It is a case of clear exaggeration. May be it was to claim more funds from their patrons
abroad or it may due to competitive evangelism among evangelical groups to claim superiority.

2.10.1 IET and their main activities

IET is the largest indigenous church-planting mission in India having its work all over North India. Their object is to ‘reach the unreached at any cost’ with the aim to plant 2000 churches by 2000 A.D. It was said that in the predominantly tribal Bastar division of Madhya Pradesh they started work at Jagadalpur in 1986 with 10 workers and by 1998 it reached 136. They have established 123 churches “saved” 1100 souls and baptised 500 people\(^{57}\). Mission functionaries say the figures are almost similar in all North Indian states. The statistics shown below substantiate the large-scale conversions and enormous work done towards its church-planting mission in North India\(^{58}\).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of Mission field started</th>
<th>No. of evangelist sent</th>
<th>No. of souls won</th>
<th>No. of Baptism</th>
<th>No. of souls Baptised with Holy spirit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>9659</td>
<td>230 7</td>
<td>2069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>12079</td>
<td>30 45</td>
<td>2075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>18376</td>
<td>5641</td>
<td>6556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>29887</td>
<td>8818</td>
<td>4561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>749</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>25065</td>
<td>9298</td>
<td>9254</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IET and claims that it aims to plant 7777 churches by 2010 A.D.

\(^{57}\) Conversion Statistics and Church growth report quoted from IET SILVER JUBILEE SOUVENIR.

\(^{58}\) Church growth report quoted from IET News letter 1999 December & FAITH TODAY Vol. IX, No.9, September 1999.
2.10.2 The various ministries of IET and how they work

i) Church planting

Sends out two workers each to the unreached villages, wins souls for Jesus and establishes satellite churches to sustain the believers spiritually. With the increase of believers a main church is established. At present they have nearly 900 congregations and hundreds of church planting preaching points.

ii) Bible training centres

There are 11 short-term training centres and a Bible College for IET in India. At Bastar there is a training centre for training evangelists for village evangelization.

iii) Village evangelism

Evangelists who have completed training to this villages are sent to un-reached villages to find preaching points. They distribute tracts and Bible portions. Interested people are invited to attend prayer meetings in a house then a prayer cell is formed. Eventually a church is planted.

---

59 Christian gatherings are defined under three headings.

i) Main Church or Congregation: - A regular gathering of believers
ii) Satellite Church: A regular weekly gathering of believers (other than Sundays)
iv) **Film ministry**

As most of the members of the target groups are illiterate, distribution of tracts or gospels is not useful. It is to reach out to them that the gospel film ministry is intended. Evangelists carry projectors to the villages and show the films like *Daya Sagar*, which depicts the story of Jesus in Hindi language. At the end people are called for personal commitment. Hundreds of villages have so far been evangelised in this way. IET says even churches have been established in place as a result of this ministry.

v) **Schools and children homes**

Schools have been started with the aim of providing primary education to tribals’ the children. In the Children’s home Sunday school classes, Hygienic lessons and general awareness topics are taught.

vi) **Counselling**

Poor people languishing in despair and hopeless situations are given counselling based on the Bible. Evangelists visit this people and will try their best to redress the grievances through different means.

2.10.3 IEHC and their main activities

EHC is an American organisation working for presentation of a printed message of Jesus Christ to every house in India. IEHC has

---

envisaged the biggest outreach plan for harvest of the souls and saturate India with the Gospel. FT-5000 (final thrust) is designed for it. 5000 missionaries are entrusted with a specific daily schedule to operate, visiting every village by 2000 A.D. on a bicycle. According to B.A.G. Prasad, Executive Director, EHC south Asia, the best conveyance for the FT-5000 missionary is a bicycle. He appealed to every Christian to sponsor to buy bicycles for the missionaries thus saving 60% of their travel time which could be invested in soul winning and continue to say that this appeal is on behalf of the millions groping in darkness that individuals families churches and Christian organisations join hands to win this ancient land of ours to be presented back to the one to whom it belongs our lord Jesus Christ\(^6\).

i) **Bible correspondence course (BCC)**

IEHC offers Bible correspondence course ‘The way to a happy life’ to all who respond to the gospel. It is a comprehensive course dealing with the simple way of salvation

ii) **Christ groups**

Christ groups are prayer cells of all those who have accepted Jesus Christ as their personal saviour and Lord through personal evangelism and seekers conferences. Non-Christians also participate regularly in these groups. These members meet regularly for spiritual edification and non-Christians are trained to sing Christian songs, pray

---

for one another and study the word of God to be effective witnesses. Missionary sources said that there is no compulsion from their side to convert people. Baptism is given only when the new believers insist. Converts are generally attached to the nearby evangelical Church. Christ Groups are found to be the main functionaries of evangelism in both the cities and rural areas of India.

iii) **Church planters training institute (CPTI)**

There are 8 training institutes for adequate training for field missionaries under FT-5000. The emphasis of their training is personal evangelism leading the people to understand the values of things of God and thus gradually win souls for the Lord Jesus Christ. They are also taught to take care of new converts in Christ and also to develop their understanding gradually and steadily. Besides classroom training the trainee missionaries are sent out daily into the highways, parks and teashops to apply what they learn in the classroom. After training the missionaries are finally placed on the field to ‘saturate’ the area with the gospel and also to form a satellite church or prayer cell, which are called Christ groups.

iv) **Adult literary programme (ALP)**

In addition to the soul winning activity they have adult literacy programme in Orissa, West Bengal and North East India. Rev. Eric Leach and some Australian friends sponsor the ALP work in Orissa. IEHC adopts villages through Adult Literacy Centres at different places. There are 15 such centres in Orissa. During 1999 some have been closed due
to opposition from RSS workers. The ALP centres at Raigada and Phulbani have 60 students and they have been taught to read and write and do some simple mathematics. Their life style has changed such as maintaining cleanliness in their homes and surroundings, establishing good relationship with each other, stop speaking bad languages etc. They have learnt how to greet people and respect them. This has also brought a qualitative change in their social, economical, physical and spiritual life as well as health and hygienic etc. Several people have given up their bad habits such as smoking, drinking, using tobacco etc. The sick people who used to go to witch doctor now have started going to hospital. It was said that besides this, the ALP students have cultivated the habits of learning and participating in public meeting and taking active part in it. Those interested to do mission work are given training at CPTI to start winning souls from the village they hail from.

In Orissa there is strong opposition to and even murderous attacks on missionaries. This is increasing daily as this state is growing as a target point for the anti-Christian forces. There are reports of forcible reconversion of Christians in remote villages where their numbers are few. Due to strong opposition from Hindu militant organisations, IEHC missionaries unwillingly stopped their regular visits to villages. It was also reported that villagers are not responding enthusiastically as before. An analysis of the conversion statistics published by IEHC substantiates this.
(From January to August)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Village visited</th>
<th>Tract distributed</th>
<th>Homes reached</th>
<th>Persons contacted</th>
<th>Response Received</th>
<th>BCC sent</th>
<th>Souls won</th>
<th>Baptism</th>
<th>Christ groups formed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>612</td>
<td>47256</td>
<td>58882</td>
<td>42387</td>
<td>10484</td>
<td>8083</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>74873</td>
<td>36168</td>
<td>16199</td>
<td>2735</td>
<td>1849</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Also IEHC has special ministry among college students, hospital patients and inmates of prisons. Special tracts are prepared for each category.

2.10.4 IEM and their main activities

IEM is an evangelical missionary movement with an objective to ‘reach the un reached’, to plant a church among every people group there by presenting the gospel to every person thus motivating the reached to be actively involved in world Evangelization. They work among 70 people groups based in 51 mission stations in India. The missionaries involve in various kinds of ministries such as personal evangelism & Church planting, Bible translation, literacy programme, health care work, community development, child development,

missionary training and communication through literature and audiovisuals\textsuperscript{62}.

i) Village evangelism

IEM started their ministry at Bastar in 1978. Evangelism and church planting constitute the main ministry. During 1998 there were 590 baptism altogether and the largest number of baptism (212\textsuperscript{a}) was in Bastar. Converts are baptised into CNI and Methodist Church. In the Bastar district IEM missionaries work among Bhatra, Mahar and Madiya tribes. Most of the tribal people practice agriculture and they have festivals associated with their agriculture cycle. They celebrate festivals for pleasing the sun and rain gods. Various contagious diseases are common in this area. Malaria, dysentery, diarrhoea and TB are common illness. Infant mortality is very high due to bad hygiene. Poverty prevent most often from going for treatment. Witch doctors have a prominent roll in these villages. IEM nurses and trained Health workers give medical care through clinics. Village health workers (VHW) visit villages to conduct community health work with stress on preventive steps\textsuperscript{63}.

\begin{itemize}
\item Baptism statistics quoted from IEM Annual Report 1998.
\end{itemize}


Gospel needs to be communicated in spoken language that varies from place to place-believe the IEM. The missionaries’ first task is to carry out a linguistic survey to determine which is the most widely understood form of language. On the basis of the survey the missionaries will learn and analyse the dialect. Gospel tracts are translated and printed in this language. Literacy classes were held. This was aimed to make the unreached people read and write. Missionaries reach remote villages using bullock carts, two wheelers, tractors, buses or on foot. Reaching some of the villages is really very difficult. The missionaries in these areas live in jungle, identify with the tribals and eat what they serve in their huts. They will reach out to many sick and needy people and will tell them that, only Jesus can heal and bring freedom from the bondage of sin and fear. Many tribals listen when they talk about the love of God and gospel and ask them to accept Jesus Christ into their lives as Saviour.

ii) Community health care work

Community health is one of the major mission activities of IEM. There are base clinics as well as mobile clinics. IEM will train local people as village health workers and these village health workers will act as the contact persons for IEM missionaries in a particular local area. This health workers are involved with health promotion, advising and educating families especially mothers. Men are asked to give up bad habits like betel and tobacco chewing, drinking alcohol, smoking and so on. These village health workers are key person to reach most of the
tribal people. This is followed up with the gospel being clearly presented to the people. Missionary sources have testified that, their primary purpose through health work is to help the tribals’ understand God’s plan of salvation for them. The role of medical work is secondary. After getting the tribal peoples’ trust the missionaries educate them. But the point to note is, only few tribals changed their old beliefs. Missionaries sincerely pray for them and visit villages regularly for their conversion. Missionaries construct borewells, supply motor pumps, build houses and run hostels for the benefit of the villagers.

In the village Makhogoan in Bastar district there are around 35 people who regularly attend Sunday worship. Once these local tribals were victims of numerous vices and evil practices. Witch doctors never allowed them to come up in life. They were suppressed and under privileged. The message of the gospel showed light to many and their life style changed. However there were threats from the local Hindus. Some converted tribals were implicated and some were excommunicated from their families and religions. Believers were forcibly taken away and threatened with death. They were compelled to follow their old faith.

In some villages the opposition was from high caste people. Opposition mounted when high caste families believed and confessed their change in faith. This new converts refuse to follow their age long old

---

64 OUT REACH “Working together to build HIS CHURCH”, Vol.XXXV No.11 November 2000.
traditions and customs. The village leaders were up against IEM missionaries and accused them of spoiling family relationship with their new religion. Vandals were hired to attack missionaries and some missionaries were forced to leave their villages.

All the ministries of IEM work together to fulfil the purpose of taking the gospel to the unreached groups of people so that prayer cells are established among every people. Towards this goal IEM recruit more missionaries for church planting and health care. Missionaries encourage baptism from native people but there was no force on anyone. Basically when Christian service is done missions except the benefactors to join their fold. Generally this mission mentality of commercialising mission service for adding number is the main drawback that has fall upon Christian mission activities in India.

2.11 Why tribals and other backward classes are attracted to Christianity?

The study was conducted in the following areas: Bastar, Bilspur, Jagadalpur, Raipur and Sihora in Madhya Pradesh and Raigada, Phulbani and Khariar Road in Orissa. In addition to the Catholic and protestant Churches there are more than twenty evangelical mission groups active in the tribal dominated Bastar district. Leaders of Hindu organisations, pastors of some evangelical

---

Churches and Christian converts were interviewed for their views. The following conclusions could be arrived at as a result.

1. The missions have started schools and hostels, dispensaries, kindergartens and various income generating programmes. Most of the missions were evangelical. These missions mainly cultivate relationships with the local people, listen to their woes, sympathise in their difficulties, teach certain (do and don’t do) and persuaded them to join the prayer group. Compassion is their basic approach. Prayer for the sick and health care are used to attract the tribals to join the prayer cells. Some missions as part of their welfare programmes also provide help in the form of loans, pump sets, money for education of children and for buying seeds for cultivation. Churches and evangelical groups appoint newly converts to work as pastors with salary. These are some of the reasons for non-Christians accepting Christianity.

2. Most of the converts accept Christianity not necessarily of personal conviction that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour. In their homes they keep picture of Jesus along with Hindu deities. The conversions are mainly on the hope of better social life, freedom from caste hierarchies, hoping for better education for children, which helps job prospects, better health care etc.
3. The sympathetic approach of pastors and missionaries during diseases, prayer during crisis and help in day-to-day problems attract them and even motivated them to change their religion.

4. The converts’ standard of living has improved. They have started wearing clean clothes, keeping their surroundings neat and tidy and their life style changed. Moreover it was reported by mission sources that there are doctors, lawyers and government servants from among Christian tribals while non-Christian still struggle to survive. This difference is mainly due to influence of Christian missions’ educational endeavours and help. This is an added attraction for non-Christians to join Christian fold.

2.12 Why Hindu groups oppose Christian missionary activities?

The major reason why Hindu activist groups respond violently to Christian missions is proselytization that is seeking converts for Christ mainly from backward tribal areas. Hindu organisations allege that missionaries are using inducements to convert ignorant tribals from their Hindu faith.

Secondly, the missionaries advise the new converts to give up worship of the Hindu deities, which tribals used to worship from their birth. Their participation in traditional religio-cultural celebration has declined. Most missionaries say: ‘you cannot worship two gods. You cannot be a Hindu as well as a Christian’. Missionaries denounce and proscribe indigenous religious practices related to marriage and death.
The missionaries insisted that if one became a Christian one should not participate in Hindu festivals or worship other gods. This creates friction at village and family levels. Sometimes certain Christian families stop contributing or participating in tribal festivals. Such behaviour of a few in a small village of 60 or 50 households isolates them and creates rupture in the social fabric. So the Hindu militants oppose Christian missions.

Thirdly, missionaries through their proselytizing activities may succeed in converting one or two members of a family. It is alleged that missionaries through these converted members try to influence other members of the family. This creates tension within families and eventually led to intervention by Hindu organisations. Hindu tribals worship many gods as their deities. Those who became Christians in a family throw away Hindu deities and village people get divided and invite intervention of Hindu leaders, which often accentuates communal rivalry.

Fourth reason for tension is related to identity. It is alleged that Christian tribals hide their religious identity to get government jobs reserved for Hindu Schedule tribes. Hindu activists provide necessary information to instigate violence against Christian tribals.

Fifthly, Christian evangelists insult Hindu saints and gods through leaflets published by evangelical groups. This provokes violent response from Hindu groups.
Lastly, through the missionary programmes for educating tribals, missions boost their social awareness. They are conscientised and exhorted to stand up and speak against caste exploitation. This is perceived as a threat by the Hindu upper class. Hence the reaction of caste Hindus against Christian missions lead to tension in the tribal dominated villages.

More than 150 attacks on Christians have been reported during 1998 and 1999. Many of the attacks have been carried out by militant Hindu groups. In January 1999 an Australian Baptists missionary, Graham Staines and his two sons were burnt alive. Staines had worked with leprosy patients in India for 34 years. Hindu groups alleged Staines’s involvement in conversion of tribals. Conversion by allurement is now the big problem before Christian community.

Catholic and Protestant churches have promoted dialogue with Indic religions respecting them saying that there are ‘seeds of truth’ in all. But the policies of the evangelical and Pentecostal groups’ were different. Their theology, outlook and understanding of salvation are different and so are their missionary methods. Hence their activities provide a lever to those vested interests seeking to frustrate true mission work. Evangelicals and Pentecostal groups’ belief in exclusive God experience make them feel that only those who follow their precepts and practices will be saved. Hence the call for conversion.

---

There are two ways of doing the mission activities. One by the way of deculturisation i.e., by mere change of faith of natives which the evangelical missions have adopt and the other way is of giving the gospel of love by understanding local culture and serving. To the evangelicals when they serve or help there is a feeling that some day the recipients of mission services will join their fold severing their previous ties. All their mission activities are aimed at winning souls and increase in the number of believers. The other mission approach is giving sacrificially what one has for the benefit of the society without expecting anything in return.

Real mission is hard and ceaseless toil in the service of the people without counting the results or the costs. What a missionary shared in common is: “a love for the poor, a love for India and a love for their Lord”. Mother Theresa has said: “Love, to be true, must be for our neighbour. They need our hands to serve them and our hearts to love them. And this love must come from self-sacrifice and be felt until it hurts”\(^{67}\). In this spirit of service there is no longer the need of expecting reward or counting of souls saved and baptism.

As the sea of poverty and deprivation engulf vast chunk of the Indian population the services rendered by missionaries cannot be underestimated, although what various mission groups do in the tribal and other villages of India do not correspond fully the spirit of the

above message, of either Gandhi or C.F.Andrews or Mother Theresa. They, by their own admission, are hankering after human souls, waiting and wailing for Salvation.

As we saw, the main actors in the contemporary communal build up probed in this study are the evangelizing Christian mission groups and the militant Hindutva organisations. The purpose of the present study is to suggest a non-provocative and acceptable model or method of work for Christian missions in India. The model proposed by Gandhi is suggested as a viable and valid method for Christian mission activities in a pluralistic context. It requires to place the Gandhian model in proper perspective and in order to do this it is necessary, first to have some familiarity with the history of Christianity and Christian missions in India, followed by a perceptive understanding of the impact of the missions on the socio-cultural life of the land and of the responses they evoked from various quarters. In the following chapters, therefore, an attempt is made to trace in brief, the history of Christianity and Christian missions in India and how the pioneers of the Hindu renaissance responded to Christian presence and also Christian mission activities.