CHAPTER - 4

PROBLEMS OF CHRISTIAN MINORITY

The problems for Christians minority prevail much more in the North than in South India where they are comparatively well established. In the North, the local Christians are often regarded as a foreign group alienated from local people and the land, and a continuing threat to the prevailing religious groups around them. There are dalit Christians who suffer discrimination both due to their racial origin and their socio-economic backwardness. According to E.Y. Campbell, “Christians in India are predominantly rural (75 percent), economically backward and generally engaged in lowly occupations. However, there is a small section of urban middle class Christians which has progressed through the educational facilities made available to them by missionaries.¹ The Christians in India as well as in Punjab are suffering from three fold discrimination: —

1. Indian Christian’s past association with the foreign rulers and their Dalit Christian origin caste is continuing to haunt them and is depriving them of equal rights.

2. Discrimination on grounds of religion.

3. Constitutional problems of the Christian Community in India leading to exclusion from political and socio-economic benefits.

All Christians in India suffer the same problems of discrimination against their community. Their problems, in general, are an integral part of the overall Dalit problems in this country. In itself the minority status is a problem, but at the

¹ See Oommen, T.K. and Hunter, Mabry, P op.cit., p. 54
same time, it has been taken as an excuse to debar the Christians from politics. This ‘minority complex’ in mind has considerably crippled and hindered Christians from taking the initiative in politics. This minority complex has created a tendency towards escapism, conservatism and political inactivism. It is imperative that this complex be got rid of to enable the Christians to make their contribution to the political life of the state. The fact that Christians are a religious minority is a serious problem for the community particularly in Northern India.

The most important grievance of religious minorities relate to the operation of state agencies in such fields as law and order, welfare, education and health, public services etc. The minorities, particularly the Christian normally have a feeling that there is a violation of their Constitutional rights by Centre as well as state level agencies and programmes in India. Some major factors responsible for the denial of fundamental rights to minority community:

1. the ideological foundations of the states that promote and maintain ethnic, linguistic or religious superiority of the majority religious group(s).
2. majority community backs central and state administration that effectively blocks the legitimate participation of the minorities in the decision making process.
3. the communalisation of politics and "politically exploitation" of religion that keeps minorities out of the mainstream, and.
4. the repressive and discriminatory laws and practices against minorities of the states.

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3 For more detail see Chapter IV, V and VI
A lack of awareness among the minorities about human rights and democracy without which it is difficult for minorities to fight for their rights. They even have problems in establishing and administering their educational institutions and maintaining their minority character.

Discrimination against the economically backward, socially immobile, and politically ineffective Christians in the matters of employment, promotion in public services, economic benefits, and facilities in education is becoming the policy of the state. Christians are being denied social and economic benefits which are within the reach of all other communities. In general, the state discriminates against minority schools, colleges, nursing colleges and hospitals in granting aid. The government has even imposed many rules and regulations to prevent minority schools from appointing their own teachers. Whenever there is a vacancy, the minority community-backed, schools and institutions are forced to accept the government instructions and on many occasions the educational institutions have to go to court to get justice. No doubt, the government interference violates the fundamental rights granted by Indian constitution, which allows linguistic and religious minorities to manage and control their own educational institutions to safeguard their interests. Minority-managed institutions always fear that non-compliance with official policies could lead to a cut in grants given by the government.

Economic exploitation, political interference and injustice, and social discrimination in many states of India against Dalit Christians by the majority religious groups, upper caste Christians, other fanatic groups, and the administrative apathy towards their grievances by a majority-dominated government has led to a situation where the new generation of the community is getting restless and aggressive. They are asserting their rights and voicing their demands from time to time against discrimination. Their dalit Christian caste origin is continuing to haunt them and is depriving them of equal rights even in the new religious structure to which they have converted. The
Christians establishment in India, especially in some Southern States, like Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala etc. are facing this problem. Although people embraced Christianity many centuries ago, many among them continue practices based on their old caste, while others have discarded them. This has led to a caste discrimination against the Christians who have discarded practices of their old caste.

The Dalit Christians (converts from lower castes among Hindus) have the experience of discrimination at two levels. Firstly along with Dalits in general and secondly on the basis of religion. They are denied their fundamental constitutional rights. On the other hand, they are discriminated against by the upper caste Christians as well as by the State. Discrimination is evident at places of worship, educational institutions and burial places etc. It can even be seen during the selection of personnel for various professions, recruitment to security outfits and institutions, and recruitment of candidates for the job of clergy at churches. Although caste has not affected Christian worship or Christian rites as such, but it has created different places for Dalits and non-Dalit Christians to occupy and has affected the roles they play in regular Sunday worship and in special Christian rites. In Kerala Dalit Christians were given separate places of worship in the Roman Catholic, Mar-Thoma and at Church of South India dioceses, at least until the late 1960s. Elsewhere in the South, the caste has played a lesser role in Protestant than in Catholic Churches, where seats seating for caste and Dalit Catholic still continues. There are also separate burial places in Catholic cemeteries as well. Dalits have been assigned inferior roles in the Catholic mass in Catholic funerals and in celebration of Christian festivals. But in Punjab, the situation is entirely different than the Southern States e.g. in Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

In general, in the context of patriarchy and caste, it is admitted that just

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as the upper castes look down at and exploit the lower castes, the latter in turn look down at their own women. Dalit women labour hard and suffer the brunt of poverty more than the men. Dalit women are easy targets in various states of India. Even The Church has failed to look into problems that are specific to Dalit women.

In fact, the upper caste Christians try to maintain and consolidate their separate identity from other Dalit Christian families e.g. Syrian Christian do not allow Neo Christians to enter their houses. There is a clear division and separation, often resulting in condemnation and downgrading of the other group. Tussle between the upper and lower caste Christians is evident in many Churches particular in Kerala State. Christians in Kerala are generally classified into three castes namely the Syrians, the Latin Catholics and the Neo-Christians or Pathukristianikal. although an alternative classification also considers the small group of Knanaya Christians (Southists) as a separate fourth caste. The Southists' claim to superiority on the basis of 'racial purity' is countered by the Northists with the claim that they are descendants from Namboothiri ancestry while the former are half breed descendants from the Nair wife of Thomas of Cana. The latin catholics have been accorded a position clearly inferior to that of the Syrians and are classified among the OBC by the Kerala government. The root of the hierarchical division between Syrian and Latin Catholics communities, however is their different caste origins, different caste identities and different status assigned to them. And hence those can properly be treated as castes.

The upper caste Christians have a hold on Churches and Church property. They are resourceful and have much influence on Christian

The image of Christians and Christianity in India is largely negative. In India, they bear a stigma imprinted by history. Due to foreign origin of Christianity, their past associations with foreign rulers, and present internationalities make some Hindus to doubt the "Indianness" of those who profess this faith. But it is not totally true. Secondly, mass media and literature is also responsible for creating a hate campaign and negative image of the Christians in India. Media always depicts wrong character and image of Christian among the people. Literature is freely distributed in states where the Sangh Parivar is active to imprint a feeling of hatred in public mind, as well as in states where political parties like BJP or its ally are (were) in power (in Gujarat, Punjab and Andhra Pradesh). Most hate pamphlets do not carry any name of an organisation no any address.

There are also some other reasons for negative image of community in India. Christianity is perceived as a colonial impartation. Indian Christians are primarily believed to be recent converts from low castes, scheduled caste and scheduled tribes by western missionaries. The Christian church is seen as an establishment which is running a large number of efficient institutions with

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the help of unlimited funds flowing directly or indirectly from Western countries. Indian Christianity is believed to be intellectually and financially dependent on the west for its ideology, doctrine, beliefs, rituals and related matters. Indian Christians are invariably viewed as supporters of political positions taken by the western "Christian countries". Lastly, Indian Christians are perceived as vigorously indulging in proselytisation and hence as being expansionist in intent and orientation.

The Christian community is taken to be very touchy in regard to violation of minority rights but invariably indifferent to the violation of human rights by the state in India. They are believed to be eager to preserve themselves and their interests at all costs. They are viewed as having been alienated from the cultural and national ethos. The views expressed by Christopher Durai Singh about the negative image are empirically sustainable. Christianity is not a western but an eastern religion, in that, it originated in Asia. Secondly there is no help and funds flowing from the Western countries. The government of India has already banned all foreign help. No funds can be received without the permission of the Government of India.

The main problem of the community is that it is not organized into a political party either at Central or at the State level. This is due to two factors. First is their socio-cultural fragmentation based on denomination and language. Secondly their conscious rejection of separate electorates initially and the subsequent non-communal approach they seem to have adopted in political affairs. Further, their small size and physical dispersion does not enable them to acquire any political clout except in certain regional areas such as in Kerala or the north-east. The study of Vidya Sagar on Northern India

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9 Oomman, T.K. and Hunter, Mabry, P. *op.cit.* 55-56.
11 Oomman, T.K. and Mabry, Hunter P. *op. cit.*, p. 54.

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Christians and Godwin Sri's study on Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh have both opined that their socio-economic backwardness is the main reason of their political inactiveness in India.

Some scholars like D.E. Smith opines that the origin of the this community is doubtful in the eyes of the Hindu. According to Smith "Like the Muslims, the Christians in India bear a stigma imprinted by history. It is the foreign origin of both Islam and Christianity, their past association with the foreign rulers, and the present internationalities which lead some Hindus to doubt the “Indian-ness” of these who profess these faiths." It is alleged by the Hindus that Christians belongs to foreign countries. Pandit J.L. Nehru rightly expressed a religion that has been in India for the two thousand years cannot be called a foreign religion.

Over half the Indian Christians are Roman Catholics and rest are Protestants. The place of the Indian Christian community in the political life of India has been inconspicuous. The reason is obvious, first, a large number of Christians had roots in the depressed & downtrodden classes, not only in Punjab but throughout India, who took no interest in the political affairs. Secondly the most of the community has been intimately associated with the foreign missionary bodies e.g. American Mission, Salvation Army England, Baptist Mission, American Church of Newzeland. Church of Scotland and tended, naturally, to remain linked with its foreign missions and working in their institutions and missions for livelihood. Thirdly, according to D.E. Smith, the Christians, like the Muslims, found it difficult to join whole heartedly in a political movement which used such Hindu Symbols as "Bande Materam or Gandhi’s Ram Rajya. Lastly, the so-called mainstream ideology of assimilation, reinforced by the education system, that promoted

12 Smith, D.E. *op.cit.*., p. 432.
13 Ibid., p. 433.
hegemonism at political and social level and contributed to the alienation of the minorities from the society at large.

I

Trajectory of Conversions In India

Generally speaking, the problems involving the Indian Christians are many and vary from region to region. The major problems of the community are the right to propagate their religion and social-economic, activities. The activities in which the missionaries are generally engaged are educational, medical and social service (see Chapter II in detail). It is always alleged by the Hindu leaders, Jan Sangh and other RSS faction (Sangh Parivar) that the missionaries indulge in conversions in the garb of these services. But Christians believe that, “Conversion is not the work of man. It is the work of God. Christian conversions take place through the wonder working of the ‘Holy Spirit’. And this is the way to have eternal life by knowing Him, the only true God, the Jesus Christ – the one God sent to earth.”

As far as the history of the conversion is concerned, these are not new in India. Buddha (5th Century B.C.) after much wrestling of the spirit during his mature years won the victory and could say “Hell is destroyed in me…. I am converted. I am no longer liable to be reborn in a state of suffering and I am assured of final salvation.” In the 6th century B.C., countless Hindus became Buddhists. Sankaracharya set about purification of Hinduism and restored many souls to Hinduism again. As a result of his efforts, Buddhism remained active only in foreign countries where it had been exported from India. More than one lac downtrodden people followed the Buddhists religion at New Delhi in 2002. During the 15th and 16th century, mass conversion of
Hindus to Islam could not be easily countered. But conversions to Islam were finally stopped only after the 17\textsuperscript{th} century when the Christian missionaries made significant conversions among the downtrodden people into Christianity as the Muslims had done earlier.

Hindus had no real mechanism for conversions. Orthodox Hindus precluded this in their adamant insistence on ‘purity’. The Arya Samajists had to lead the way with the ‘Suddhi Movement’ to reconvert (bring back) the Harijans who had embraced either Islam or Christianity. There are many examples that such movements were started in various states from time to time in India for the recoversion of the dalit people. In Punjab, Suddhi Movement was started by the Arya Samajists nearabout April, 1884, but failed to reconvert the dalits because they could not provide the social status in the society.

Conversions from Hinduism to Christianity created new tensions and emotions after 1947 in India, particularly during the regime of both Congress and B.J.P. governments, Christian community was facing a lot of problems to propagate its own religion in India. A number of anti missionary agitations have taken place in certain parts of the country. These agitations have resulted in the freedom of "Religion Bill" in Orissa and the formation of a special committee to investigate the activities of foreign missionaries in India. The Niyogi committee appointing by Madhya Pradesh government on 14\textsuperscript{th} April 1954, attracted nation wide attention. Whatever could be the reason. Pandit Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India, wanted a full and detailed report on the actual conditions prevailing in the state of Madhya Pradesh. Niyogi Enquiry Committee, was appointed by the Congress government of Madhya Pradesh on the advice of some fanatic Hindu Congress leaders by their

\begin{footnote}{Mustafa Faizan and Sharma Anurag (2003) “Conversion: Constitutional and Legal Implication”, Kanishka Publishers & Distribution, New Delhi, p. 40.}\end{footnote}
resolution of April 14, 1956. In the resolution, the government stated categorically inter-alia that:

"Representations have been made to the government from time to time, that Christian missionaries either forcefully or through temptations of monetary and other gains, convert illiterate aboriginals and other backward people, thereby offending the feelings of non Christians and that it has further been represented that missions are utilized, directly or indirectly, for purposes of political or extra religious objectives."\(^{15}\)

The five member Niyogi committee in its findings observed the practice of Christian missionaries on their alleged illegal methods. The following were the findings of the committee.\(^{16}\)

1 Since the Constitution of India came into force there has been an appreciable increase in the American personnel of the missionary organisations operating in India

2 Enormous sum of foreign money flow into the country for missionary work, comprising educational, medical and evangelical activities.

3 Conversions are mostly by undue influence and misrepresentation. or in other words not by conviction but by various inducements offered for proselytization in various forms.

4 Missions are in some places used to serve extra religious ends.

5 As conversion muddles the converts sense of unity and solidarity with


his society, there is danger to the loyalty to the country and state being undermined.

6 Evangelization in India appears to be a part of the uniform world policy to revive Christendom for re-establishing Western supremacy and is not prompted by spiritual motives.

With the appointment of Niyogi committee, there had been an air of uneasiness all over the land and what pained Christians most was that the Christian community had so suddenly become suspect and was being subjected to harassment which went against India's traditional spirit of tolerance and the pledge of the earlier national leaders at the constituent assembly. The policy of the government had been laid down clearly in the Indian Constitution which guarantees liberty of thought, expression, faith and worship and also freedom to profess, practice and propagate any religion. The constitutional liberty should not be considered as an abstract declaration but a concrete reality for inspiring confidence in religious minorities like Christians who constitute less than three percent of total population of India.17

In 1954, a Member of Parliament introduced the bill into Lok Sabha ("Indian Converts, Regulation & Registration Bill"). It was rejected by an overwhelming majority by the house. After this, it was also opposed by Pandit J.L. Nehru. It was the first attempt by the fanatic group to introduce such anti-conversion bill on the floor of the Parliament.

From time to time, the various states also implemented various acts on conversion or activities of missionaries. In 1957, when the communists came into power in Kerala state, an 'Education Bill' was introduced to control education imparted by private bodies such as Christian missions. The

Christian community opposed and criticised this bill but was finally passed with some modifications.\textsuperscript{18}

History of India certifies that some of the fanatics and fundamental people have always raised the voice against the minorities inside and outside the Parliament or Legislative Assemblies. In 1963, a private member bill revived some of the accusations against missions and missionaries which had been made earlier by the Niyogi Committee Report. It was called “Madhya Pradesh Conversion Bill” it included a clause making it obligatory on would be converts to declare that conversion was not due to “temptation or pressure”. Secondly a minor was not entitled to change his religion. The bill also declared the “work of conversion among the children and others to be against the interest of the nation.\textsuperscript{19}

In Orissa, a similar type of bill was also introduced in State Legislative Assembly (see Appendix V) but the validity of the Orissa Freedom of Religious Act. 1967 was challenged in the Orissa High Court. The Court struck down the enactment as ultra vires of the constitution in 1972. The matter was taken up to the Supreme Court by the Orissa government. This freedom of Religion Act is obviously not designed to ensure “freedom of religion” but to place restrictions on practice and propagation of religion.

The first bill on religious conversion was rejected by the state legislative assembly in 1958. Then, again, in 1968, Madhya Pradesh Congress government passed the second Freedom of Religion law (see Appendix V). But Rev. Stanislans, a Christian Priest, chose to defy the law which required that District Magistrate should be informed of every conversion and invited the prosecution as a test case. The matter went to the Supreme Court through the Madhya Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act which was passed in October

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p. 244.

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1968 by the then government, of which Jan Sangh was a dominant political constituent. In March 1969, after the coalition government fell, the succeeding Congress Ministers under two Chief Ministers first S.C. Shukla then PC Sethi, and then S.C. Shukla again, suffered political instability. They did not repeal the Act. The matter went up to the Supreme Court. In the judgment, (1997) the Supreme Court constituted a five-member bench which pronounced in categorical terms:

"That there is no fundamental right to convert any person to one's own religion" The Court reassured that "what Article 25(1) of the Indian constitution grants is not the rights to convert another person to one's own religion by an exposition of its tenets. It has to be remembered that Article 25(1) guarantees "Freedom of conscience" to every citizen and not merely to the follower of one religion and that turn postulated that there is no fundamental right to convert another person to one's own religion, because if a person purposely under takes the conversion of another person to his religion as distinguished from his effort to transmit or spread the tenets of his religion that would infringe on the "Freedom of Conscience" guaranteed to all the citizens of the country alike."

This is taking a legalistic point of view. There is no mention of the fact that conversion is a deeply spiritual issue to be decided to switch over to a different religion only for the sake of survival, but can it be denied that at least some among them had been moved by the tenets of say Christianity or Buddhism?

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19 Ibid., pp.244-245. For details on conversion, see Robinson, Rowena (1998) Conversion Continuity and Change, Sage Publication, New Delhi, pp. 32-60.


21 Ibid. p. 249 and also see Article Gangadhar, V, 'Humiliated (2002) Poor Dalit Hope for a lightly life by getting converted' See in The Tribune, Chandigarh.
Freedom of religion as conceived in Article 25 is an individual and not a group right. Freedom of conscience is a fundamental citizenship right. One may choose any religion of one's choice or opt to be an agnostic or an atheist. The Supreme Court Verdict had not paid attention to the conscience of the individual in Article 25. It would be difficult for one to interpret this Article in a way that denies the individual the freedom to choose a faith of his preference.22

Both Madhya Pradesh and Orissa governments, introduced the bills into the State Assemblies and passed it at the behest of rich landlords who had a vested interest in keeping the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in a state of bondage so that they themselves could remain control of subservient labour. The aims and objectives of these anti-conversion Acts were to prevent conversion by force, fraud or inducement and to stop the religious activities of the missionaries in these states.

In 1971, a bill to forbid any conversion of minors was rejected by the Parliament. The Deputy Home Minister expressed the views that such a prohibition ran counter to the Constitution. But in May 1978, the Legislative Assembly in Arunachal Pradesh enacted “the Arunachal Pradesh Freedom of Indigenous Faith Bill” and sent it for the President’s assent. While the bill awaited the President’s assent, the anti Christian groups started threats of violence against Christians. This threat created panic amongst innocent Christians in the state.

"The Arunachal Pradesh Freedom of indigenous Faith Bill" (see appendix-V) was found to be defective by the Union Ministry of Law and the President returned it to the Legislative Assembly in Arunachal Pradesh. With a minor change in the its title the bill was passed again. It became the Freedom

22 Gangadhar, V. op.cit., p. 10
of Religion Act of Arunachal Pradesh". In a sense, this act is different from similar acts of Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. It had a list of indigenous religions including Buddhism and Vaishnavism. Christianity was conspicuously absent from this list. Clause 3 of the this Act reads:\(^{23}\)

"No person shall convert or attempt to convert, either directly or otherwise, any person from indigenous faith by use of force or by inducement or by any fraudulent means nor shall any person abet any such conversion."

An important section of scholars believes\(^{24}\) that apparently Christian faith has deliberately and purposefully been left out. This has already had an adverse effect on the attitude of the non-Christian in Arunachal Pradesh towards their Christian brothers and sisters. The latter have more or less been made second class citizens in their own home state.

**Bill in Parliament:**

During the Janta rule in 1977, Mr. O.P. Tyagi introduced the Freedom of Religions Bill in the Parliament in 1978. He is well known as an active Jan Sangh worker and for his extreme communal views which sought to prohibit conversion from one religion to another by the use of force, fraud or inducement. Tyagi's opinion regarding the Christians Missionaries is that: "Christian Missionaries do not merely convert, they brain wash them. The object of the missionaries in converting people is to destroy their original religion. They also spread the spirit of inferiority complex". Further he also expressed that the "people become Christians during famine, flood or drought


\(^{24}\) Ibid. p.56
and not by conviction but to answer to the call of their belly."  

O.P. Tyagi became the acting General Secretary of Jan Sangh working committee at Nagpur in 1976. Private bill mooted by him was clearly a calculated attempt by the Jan Sangh or perhaps some other sinister force, aiding and abetting him in eroding the constitutional rights of Christians and to undermine the dignity of self righteousness.  

Nirmalendu Bikash Rakshit expressed his views about constitutional right, and said that the article 25 (1) of the constitution of India provide that all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and have the right to freely profess, practise and propagate any religion. Thus, the individuals are entitled not only to hold particular religious beliefs, but they can, in addition, practise and propagate their particular religion. The term practise means that an individual can also perform all the external acts and rituals which are essential and organically connected with the religion of his choice. In short, Article 25 guarantee to individuals the right to profess, 'practise' and also to propagate any religion which may even mean conversion. The Supreme Court has held, "the provision has given everyone the right to propagate religious views for the edifications of other."  

Alexander Marthomas. Metropolitan Marthoma church expressed that the freedom of religion introduced by O.P. Tyagi in Parliament raises grave concern in the minds of the Christian community in this country. Roman Catholic Bishops expressed their own anxiety and said that the bill was ostensibly meant to prevent conversions from one religion to another by the use of force, inducement or fraud. But the meaning it gives to these terms is so  

wide that they would concern all conversions even genuine ones and render them illegal. The bill would take away, from the citizens of India the fundamental right enshrined in the constitution to profess, practice and propagate the religion of one's choice.28

The various Christian denominations and other organizations opposed the bill and also protested against it. The Christians in India, united together under one banner and opposed the bill which according to them was nothing short of a black bill. Christians opposed the bill because its passage would undermined their freedom to preach and propagate their faith, a guarantee given in a civilized and secular constitutions like the one in India.29 The various Christian and other organization in India, specially in Punjab, demanded justice, equality and freedom from the majority community. Because with the freedom of religion bill 1978, there will be no freedom of religion in the hitherto secular state of India.

Morarji Desai the then Prime Minister of India was mainly responsible for bringing in The Freedom of Religious Bill 1978. Not only the Christians agitated and demonstrated against or deplored the prejudice which O.P. Tyagi’s Bill has so openly exploited but even members of other communities joined with the Christian community for the unscrupulous approach of the Jan Sangh-RSS to alter the sacred fundamental rights to “profess, practice and propagate” one’s faith enshrined in the constitution of India.”30

In regard to the creation of this bill, Sardar Prakash Singh Badal former Chief Minister of Punjab, supported Christian community and said that everyone has the freedom to profess, practice and propagate the faith and

29 Ibid, pp. 156-166.
30 Banerjee, B.N. Op. cit. 44
religion of his choice. According to him, the Christian community has given the maximum contribution in the field of education and other social and charitable works. Although the government spends crores of rupees for education, the government institutions have not been able to match the efficacy and high standards of Christian institutions. The Christian institutions do not receive government aid yet they provide the students with the best facilities.

After 24 years, the Private Member’s bill. (The prohibition on Religious conversion Bill. 2001) was moved in the Lok Sabha once again on 27th July 2001 by Anant Gangaram Geete, who represents the Shiv Sena from Maharashtra (an ally of the Bharatiya Janata Party in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). The Bill sought a ban on religious conversions, because as per the argument of A.G. Geete, conversion is taking place through force. Forced or induced conversion should be stopped. It is therefore, proposed to prohibit conversion through force or inducement. This according to him is the main reason of introducing the bill in the Lok Sabha.

The bill provoked an immediate protest from the opposition parties, who saw in it another attempt by the Hindutva Parivar to mount pressure on India’s already beleaguered minorities, especially the Christian community. Under parliamentary practice, a private member’s bill was discussed but failed to muster support. Normally the member withdraws the bill after a debate.

On October, 2002, at the behest of Chief Minister J. Jayalalitha issued an ordinance that has banned conversion of a person from one religion to another by use of force, fraudulent methods or allurement. After this, as ratified by the legislative Assembly of Tamil Nadhu, headed by J. Jayalalitha,

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31 Ibid. pp. 163-64.
this bill has been implemented and bans all religious conversion within the state.

Minority religious rights are seen by the Sang not as a mark of democracy but as unwarranted privilege for the minority groups and therefore something to be discarded. The idea that India might have a composite culture, made up of numerous religious strands, is simply an anathema to the forces of Hindutva. According to them, even to consider India having such currents is to accept a position of permanent weakness. For them, it is only by recognizing and building on the “Hindu essence” of India, of Bharat (as Sangh prefers the term) that the country can every become strong.

In taking this position, Hindu nationalists are obviously overriding their own rights and harming those of the minorities. Besides, it accrues from the Sangh argument that they alone are the true nationalists.

II

Conversions and Reaction of the Sangh Parivar

Today, the term ‘conversion’ in India has become very controversial, provocative, irritating and a painful one. It has become provocative to many fanatics who do not understand the true meaning of the word. It has become controversial because it divides the people of good heart for no fault of their own and it has become painful because, on account of their faith or pattern of living, they are persecuted and deprived of human justice and equality. It has also become a powerful weapon for the politicians to divide and destroy the

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unity and integrity of the Nation by arousing the sentimental feelings and issues on the basis of differences of religious, cultural, liturgical and caste oriented customs of the people.

During the last few years, attacks on Christian minorities and their institutions have been on the rise in various part of India due to these conversions and these have been highlighted in the media. In several states of India like Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal, Orissa, Haryana Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Maharasthra, priests and religious activist have been assaulted, harassed, stripped naked paraded on public streets and even murdered/raped. Nuns have been raped. They even threatened to cut off water and power supply. One of RSS parcharks even said

"We are in power in Delhi. We are in power here in Gujarat. We cannot tolerate Christian missionaries, doing what they like with you. You support us, We will be with you".

Sangh Parwar made target of Christians through slogan like ‘Aaj Kasai, Kaal Ishai’ literally meaning today the Muslims and tomorrow the Christians. This was one of the slogans of fanatic Hindus during the anti Muslim pogrom in Mumbai in January 1993. this message was clear “Today we are targeting Muslims; tomorrow we “II target Christians”.

The spate of attacks on the Christians community in different parts of

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India during 1977-2003 shows in retrospect at least, that the “saffron brigade” had been preparing a ground for an on-slaught on its minority community for quite sometime. From time to time Christian leaders also submitted memorandum (see Appendix IX) for the protection of Community”. Some important and major incidents took place as:

- On September 2, 1997, a Christian Priest, Father Christudas was paraded naked in Bihar.
- Five Priests were killed during September 1994. Three in Gumla district, Bihar one in Nagpur, Maharashtra and one in Meerut, U.P.
- Father Davessia was shot at inside his hostel room in Ghaziabad, U.P.
- February 25, 1995. Sister Rani was dragged out of a bus and stabbed in Indore, M.P.
- On April 2, 1995. Sister Etty and four other Nuns of the Francian sisters of St. Mary of the Angels were assaulted in their home in Ghaziabad, near Delhi.

The tragic and brutal killing of an Australian missionary, Graham Stewart Staines (58) and his two young sons Philip (9) Timothy (7) took place at Manoharpur village in Orissa’s Keonjhar district on January 23, 1999. He was targeted on the alleged ground that he was converting innocent and unwilling tribals to Christianity. This has become one of the most gruesome episodes in the history of India. It was clearly the fallout of the concerted efforts by constituents of the Sangh Parivar, especially the Bajrang Dal, in this case, to further their communal agenda. Three Central Ministers including Defence Minister George Fernandes were deputed to the spot inquiry and required to submit a report. Understandably the Central Government stand was that the Bajrang Dal was not involved. Graham Stewart Staines, who was in India for

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36 Puniyani, Ram (2000) "The Other Cheek: Minorities Under Threat, Media House, Delhi, pp. 115-117. See also Indian Currents: A Voice for the Voiceless, XII. Issue 20, New Delhi, pp. 18-19.
almost thirty five years, ran a leprosy hospital. The senseless killing of a missionary and his two children in Orissa was vehemently condemned by all political parties. K.R. Narayana, the then President of India also condemned the killings and he termed the act as a monumental aberration. Instead of being thankful and appreciating his tireless efforts of so many years coming for Leprosy patients, he has been done to death in this manner. This is a monumental aberration from the tradition of tolerance and humanity for which India has been known. He said that the act of this “barbarous killing belongs to the world’s inventory of black deeds.” The widow of G.S. Staines has said the perpetrators of the crime should be forgiven as it was the Almighty who had drawn the life span of her husband. “God gives children. He gives them life. He gives and takes. I am grateful to God for giving him (Staines) this long a life to serve people.”

After the BJP came to power in Gujarat there were many major and minor attacks on Christians. Copies of the New Testament were publicly burnt by fanatic militants in Rajkot and nuns and priests insulted in their schools. Even a corpse was dug up in the night in Khada district’s Kapadwanj village in Gujarat. The coffin was later placed in front of the Methodist Pastor’s residence. The reason, was that the Christians buried the dead on the illegal land. The land was, in fact, allotted two years ago for Christian burial.

Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee and Sonia Gandhi both visited the Dangs (Gujarat) to know the actual situation. RSS, VHP, BD, H.J.M. together with the BJP combined are often described as the Sangh Parivar. They tried to justify the aggression on the ground that Hinduism was in danger from the ‘Christian Conspiracies’. Whatever the instigation, however, the actual attacks were

38 The Times of India, January 24, 1999. Chandigarh.
carried out in the Dangs by one group of local advasis on another.39

During the last few years the Christians have been called "traitors" 'foreigners', "second class citizens" etc. They have been given specific dates by which they have to leave the country, and their missionaries are threatened to be thrown out of India. They are accused of “forced conversions” by the million among the dalits, the tribals and the Hindus. The world is made to believe that thousands of crores of rupees are smuggled” into India to induce and bribe the Indians to become Christians.40

Christian missionaries have been blamed for much of what oils the regional insurgency, separatist tendencies, language agitation and so on. The RSS, VHP and the remaining Sangh Parivar have the following main objections against Christian community in India.

(a) It is a stigma on Christians that they are foreigners. The Christians are accused of being anti national and agents of foreign powers to disintegrate the nation;

(b) Why do Christians preach the gospel to the poor and why Jesus Christ's teachings are spread in India? That the social work is used as an instrument for religious conversion is another accusation;

(c) The population of Indian Christians is increasing day by day and conversion are also a cause of increasing population. There conversions are being done forcibly and inducement to convert the poor people into Christianity:

Lure poor people to Christianity for religious propaganda. All Christian institutions are receiving foreign aid.

The role of missionaries in India is also doubtful. They are helping to convert the tribe and dalit people. The foreign Christian missionaries are instigating rebellious forces in the country.

Indian Christians trace their origin to St. Thomas, a disciple of Jesus Christ who planted Christianity in the soil of Kerala in A.D. 52 that is nearly 300 years before Emperor Constantine embraced.\(^4\) Christianity and made it the religion of the state. "Reckoning, and Marshall, wrote there were about one million Christians before the first white man appeared in India. This is about the same figure of Christian in India today. It disproves all notions of Christianity being an alien religion, rooted in western civilization. It is an Asian religion like Buddhism and Jainism and is older than the present form of Hinduism.\(^42\) No doubt, Christianity in India is as old as Christianity in Israel.' In fact Christianity reached England in 597 A.D. and America about 900 years later Pandit J.L. Nehru said.\(^43\)

"A religion that has been in India for the last two thousand years cannot be called foreign". Indian Christians are fully Indian because they are children of the Indian soil. They are not the citizens of Vatican, American or any European nation."

That the social service is used as an instrument for religious conversion


\(^41\) See in detail in Chapter III

\(^42\) A Paper presented in Seminar by Philip, A.J. (Sept. 9, 2000), Status of Minorities in the Present Political Scenario which was organized by the Delhi Archbishop Dioces at St. Columbia School, New Delhi.
is another objection by the Sangh Parivar. From its inception Christianity has been involved in social work regardless of religious conversions. Spreading the good news of God's love through work is the work of Christ himself. But on the other side the Christians believe that the Bible has always had a great concern and special care for the downtrodden and dalit people of the society. They also believe that God has commanded his people (Christians) to give a very special care and concern for the oppressed, the poor and the suffering bonded labourers.

God's design has been to end the human suffering and injustice to the under-privileged. God has acted in history to free the poor and the oppressed from economic and social disparity to bring political and social justice. Both social injustice and oppression of any kind is a sin against the mankind.

Jesus Christ, in his solemn inaugural sermon launched his special mission of proclaiming the Good News of Salvation to the poor, the miserable, the poverty-stricken the broken hearted, the downtrodden, the exploited and the oppressed. Jesus announced his understanding of this great social thrust of concern and love at the temple of Nazareth from the recording of the book of prophet Isaiah.45

"The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has chosen me to preach, the Good News to the poor .......the lord, will save His people."

In this passage, the proclamation of the Gospel is primary to the poor and the social justice has to follow the freedom for those in bondage. Christ
Himself did serve the people, the people in need. He fed the hungry, healed the sick and preached about the freedom from bondage, the release for those in prison, clothes for the naked.

Even the Bible says that the poor are the object of God's special care and blessings. "Listen, my dear brothers, God chose poor people of this world to be rich in faith and to posses the kingdom which he promised to those who love him." Jesus Christ identified himself with the poor, and the weak (that social workers are used as instruments for religious conversion is another accusation). Jesus relates his preferential love to the working class and the poor in their frustration and in their despair as well. The followers of the Christ in India are spreading the message (and word of God) among the poor. The main mission of Christians in India is to spread the Gospel of Christ to minister to the spiritual needs of the poor and the orphans. In India Christians have no special motive to convey the message of Jesus Christ. The very concept of service to man done by the Christian Churches seems to be totally misinterpreted, with a vicious plan of propaganda. But it is true that some selfish Christian Priests use religion as instrument for collecting money from the Western countries by showing the social work done by them in India. This work is done only by some independent religious groups. It is also a fact, that such independent groups are getting a lot of money by individual visits, from the Christian countries for their individual motives only and not for religious purposes.

The Christians have not formed any political party of their own but always remained a part and parcel of general body politics of this nation. It is a wrong observation that the followers of Christ are converting the poor people for political motive in India. It is just a false propaganda against Christian

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46 The New Testament, James, Chapter 2:5.
community. It is a fundamental right to preach one's own religion. The Constitution of India allows all religions to preach and spread their own religion. They are following the message of Jesus Christ who said "Go, therefore, and teach all nations, baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." 

The followers of Christianity believe that the mission of Jesus are giving to them a new identity, new life, self respect and new principles for life. Today the followers know that Christ has asked "to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and shelter the homeless. In a nutshell, if any other person has strong faith and strong roots of religion, nobody can convert him to another religion.

That the population of Christian Community is increasing day by day is another charge of Sangh Parivar. Christians do not agree with Sangh Parivar because the number of Christian has been falling with every census. It has come down from 2.6 percent in 1981 to 2.5 percent in 1991. High literacy of Christian women and urbanization account for their smaller families. The census shows that there has been a decline in the number of Christians in India. One of the main reasons expressed by the Christian leaders, for this decline is that the Government gives a number of inducements and concessions to dalit Christians to convert them to Hinduism. Privileges to dalit Christians as inducement are immediately granted whereas the same privileges, even if required by Hindu backward classes, are never granted. This is because of nefarious motives of Sangh Parivar to convert dalit Christians to Hinduism at any and all costs. This has been the Government policy ever since independence. It is the objection of the Sangh Parviar that Christian missionaries use allurement and force in converting Hindus to


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Christianity and charging them of undermining Hinduism. The Sangh Parivar in retaliation attached Christian and Institutions all over the country. But most of the allegation are based on the mistrust and have nothing to do with the reality. Sh. P.R. Ram supporting the Christians says in his article " A campaign without content." As per the census data the All India Christian population in 1971 was 2.6 percent in 1981 it was 2.44 percent and in 1991 it stood at 2.32 percent. This shows a marginal decline in the population of Christians. Justice Wadhwa Commission reports that between the year 1991 to 1998, the population of Hindus rose by 2.52 percent but the number of the Christians in the country shows only an increase of a negligible 0.008 percent. These figures itself belie the allegation of massive, forced conversions by the Christian, missionaries. Christian are also blamed for forced conversion but this term itself is contradictory.

A forced conversion is not a conversion. The genuine conversion is a personal matter. If there are individuals or groups, belonging to any religion, who convert by force or insulting or defaming other's faith in the name of their religion, betray God. Then the law should take its own course. Sangh Parivar or any other political or religious organization should not be allowed to decide the course of action.

Christian leaders believe that Sangh Parivars has used its propaganda machine to depict a negative image of Christians. It worked overtime to show that Christian missionaries are out of the convent and made most people believe that Pope are the CIA agents and are behind the proselytization drive. They projected Christianity as a foreign religion and Christians as disloyal citizens. Ram Puniyani expressed that hate atmosphere, thus created, enabled the Parivar to coin new slogans like Christi Bhago Hindu Jago. (Christians go

51 Puniyani, Ram, op.cit. p.42.
away awake Hindus) or "Christians Quit India," and the ignorant fall an easy prey to propaganda.

The Sangh Parivar has justified that Christian and missionaries are converting Hindus. There are five arguments put forth by opponents of conversion.

1. India is a Hindu country and the country has a Hindu heritage which is a part of the national culture. To convert, therefore, is against the national Hindu identity. The B.J.P.'s slogan therefore is "one nation, one culture and one people".

2. All those who are born in this country must have a sense of belonging to the country. Such a sense of belonging or patriotism is a quality of Hindus. If one differs from Hinduism, then he/she cannot remain patriotic.

3. Those who convert, normally join Islam or Christianity. Both these are foreign religions. Since their sacred places are outside the country they have no loyalty to the land. Their loyalties are extra territorial.

4. Why resort to conversions if all religious are equal?

5. Conversions take place due to inducement, coercive motivation and compulsion. Therefore, they need to be banned since they are not genuine.

Professor Kunal Ghosh, also blamed that the churches and Christian missionaries are creating many social ills and political unrest in north and north east India. He felt a Christian conspiracy in the various parts of India and popular movements from Darjeeling to Mizoram. This is part of a strategy


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to malign the Church institutions Ghosh also blamed the church for the demand for a separate state in North Bengal called Kamtapuri. Further he alleged that many tribals have been converted to Christianity. He also criticized the church for "playing politics with the script of the Bodo language."4

The next objection of the Sangh Parivar is that big donations or foreign aid is being used to lure poor people for conversion. Sangh also blamed that Christian institutions are also receiving foreign aid. P. A. Sangma, former Lok Sabha Speaker, who rejected the view of Sangh Parivar said that all foreign donations and foreign aid are regulated and audited by the government authorities. There is no exhorbitant amount of money flow and the changes exaggerated. The foreign money is pouring in from Western countries like America, England and Germany, has been greatly helpful India in economic development. Perhaps, this can be over looked as the common practice among nations. But the Hindu religious institutions in India are also receiving money from foreign countries for social work.55

The chief reason for attack against Christian missionaries.

( ) That the Christians missionaries are indulging in anti-national activities and encouraging separatist tendencies among the Christian Adivasi.

( ) That they are converting illiterate and poor people by force, fraud and other material inducements and

( ) That their schools, hospitals and orphanages are proselytising agencies.

55 "The True Face", op.cit. p. 172
Role of Missionaries: Political Dimensions:

It is also alleged that the Christian Missionaries are helping to convert the tribes, poor and dalit people in India, and providing different types of facilities to the downtrodden people for conversion: But the Christians do not agree that the missionaries have such type of activities to convert the poor people. The population of Christians is comparatively falling in the last few years. The government of India has registered the missionaries and has found that a very few missionaries are living in India and working for the welfare of the humanity.

The Christian missionaries, have been setting up Churches, Seminaries and Schools at many places during last several centuries. They learnt Indian languages, set up printing presses and published religious as well as secular literature, to spread literacy and their faith. In the process they adopted many Indian languages for further communication. Churches adopted many local traditions as well. Despite 2000 years of Christian presence, and 300 years of British rule the population of Christian missionaries Christian is very microscopic in India. Despite this, the threat of their population overtaking the Hindu population has begun to be projected in last few years.

The Sangh Parivar wants the government to throw out all foreign missionaries from India. But there are thousands of Indian Sadhus and Sanyasis spreading Hinduism in Europe and America. They teach yoga transcendental meditation etc. to their numerous European and American followers. But the foreigner never think of throwing them out of their countries. State wise number of foreign missionaries registered upto 1.1.1973

It has been alleged that health and educational services has been used

57 Bhatti, Brah Dutt (1986) “Political Roots of Christianity” see in Devendra Swaroop “Politics of Conversion” (ed.), Deen Dayal Research Institute, Delhi p.100.
by missionaries for converting people and dalits to Christianity. If this was true, most of the teachers and pupils in the educational institutions run by missionaries would have been Christians. This is not the case. Same is the case with health related institution like hospitals Medical Colleges, Nursing schools etc. The people of the community are working with national spirit. The Christian doctrine also opines that both education and health are the pillars of democracy and so for democracy of India, the community has a lot of contribution in the education and health field. It is wrong to say that the education and health services have been used as allurement for conversion. According to the leaders of the community, if such is the case, then many personalities like L.K. Advani, Former Deputy Prime Minister of India, Satpal Jain former M.P. Former Chief Minister, Madan Lal Khurana, former Prime Ministers. Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi, Jyoti Basu former Chief Minister who received the education from the missionary institutions, never showed the desire to adopt Christianity. They have never blamed the mission institutions for conversions.

### Table No. 6.0

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<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Name of State</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Assam</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Bihar</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Gujarat</td>
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<td>J&amp;K</td>
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<td>M.P.</td>
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Source: Brahmat Dutt Bharti, “Political Roots of Christianity” see in “Politics of Conversion” (ed.) by Devendra Swarop, published by Deen Dayal Research Institute, Delhi 1986, p. 100.

III

Issues Relating to Christian Community During B.J.P. Government

After Tyagi bill, and particularly during the regime of BJP government the different accusation have been raised by the Sangh Parivar against Christians. The Sangh Parivar is raising the demand to remove the status of the Christians as a minority community. Even they are not in the favour of National for Commission Minority (NCM) of India. There is a clash between the rights of Christians and the “feelings” of the Non-Christian population of the state. But the general citizen expect the state to protect the rights of the minorities and to control the "feeling". It is also the feeling of Sangh Parivar that Christians of India are likely to divide India again on the basis of Christians-than (A land of Christians) just like the Muslims managed to divide India and secured Pakistan in 1947.

The next blame is related to Pope’s visit, when Pope John Paul II arrived in New Delhi in November 1999 on a four day visit. During his visit Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Sanskruti Raksha Manch (SRM), organized a march and demanded an apology from the Pope for the four centuries old inquisition in Goa.
Sangh Parivar also put some following blames allegations:

(0) They blamed that the Portuguese Jesuit missionaries backed by the colonial powers; destroyed several Hindu temples four centuries ago which were related with Hindu cultural and civilization. Sangh also criticised the Pope visit and demanded to rebuild temples in India.

(0) Conversion is an unconstitutional act in India. Therefore, the Pope should assure that the church will not indulge in conversion;

(0) The Pope should issue order for the release of four R.S.S. workers kidnapped in Tripura;

(0) He should ensure that the church will not be used for the extremist activities in India;

(0) He should ask the church to stop character assassination campaign against Vishav Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal; and

(0) He should accede that the Salvation is also possible through Hinduism.

During Pope's visit, no controversial issues were discussed with Prime Minister Vajpayee, but the Pope definitely talked about peace unit and harmony between religions of different faiths. On the issue of conversion, the Vatican official said the subject did not come up for discussion between the Pope and the Indian government leaders, and that "conversion is a human rights issue is being misunderstood in India."58

The Sangh Parviar took the Pope's visit to India very critically. But many Panjab leaders like G.S. Tohra, President. SGPC, Simranjit Singh Mann, Bibi Jagir Kaur, former President SGPC welcomed his visit, Bibi Jagir Kaur

also invited the Pope to pay a visit at the Holy City of Amritsar. Simranjit Singh Mann criticized the Sangh Parivar and said, that the so-called communal organisation like Sangh Parivar has no right to stop the visit of Pope.\textsuperscript{59} Hamid Massih, President of Punjab Christian Movement said in a statement. That was the conspiracy of Sangh Parivar to give the blame to the Christian community in India for disturbances during Popes visit. He also added that it was unfortunate undemocratic and aggressive campaign unleashed by VHP and Bajrang Dal against the Pope.\textsuperscript{60}

By taking the conversion issue, the Sangh Parivar proposed a "National Debate" on conversion in 1999. Former Prime Minister Vajpayee also called for "National Debate" on the topic of conversion but the Congress and the left parties rejected the idea. The Christian religious leader Archbishop Alan De Lastic also said in a statement that a debate is always a welcome part of democratic process to arrive at a consensus." However, it should not be merely confined to the Christians, Hindus and the government, but should be relevant to all religions. A healthy debate is essential in a democracy on all issues of public interest if such debates does not serve narrow sectarian interests and involves all religions.\textsuperscript{61}

While supporting this issue, the Christian leader also expressed the views that debate is, admittedly an integral part of a democratic culture. But there are at least two preconditions in a debate to be meaningful. First, the debate must be based on sufficient and reliable data, and not on wild conjectures and mutual acrimony. Second, there must be a non-partisan mediator who can understand the data and the scope of the issue beyond the


\textsuperscript{60} Sansar. Masihi November 1-15, 1999, Jalandhar.

\textsuperscript{61} Verghese, B.G.(1999) "Question of Conversion – II : A Pertinent National Agenda" See in The Tribune, Chandigarh, also see Indian currents Vol. XI issue 45, 8-14, New Delhi, p. 122.
clamour of partisan assertions.

Prime Minister Vajpee's credibility has been high and none is cynical of his intentions in this regard, a word of caution was sounded as the subject itself is debatable. And, at the next semantic twist, a debatable subject becomes a 'controversial subject'. It was not long ago, after all, that a place of worship in Ayodhya was described as a "disputed structure", diluting the inhibition in demolishing it. The freedom to do something will be seriously compromised, once it is projected as debatable." The very label will intensify resentment against conversions, irrespective of the facts and circumstances of the matter.62

Hari Jai Singh, also expressed his views on conversions and said that if those who complain of misuse of the Right to Religion are proved right, the instruments of force, fraud or material inducement must be punished according to the law of the land, which is adequate. But if the conversions are proved to be voluntary, an objective view of the situation should be taken. Here again, the law of land should deal firmly with those who oppose the "Right of Informed Choice".63

Conversion is not a new issue, but an old one and present for many years in India. It is not limited to Christianity or Hinduism. There are a lot of examples like Dr. Ambedkar and Ramraj who helped in the process of conversion of thousands of dalit Hindus to Buddhism. They wanted to raise the social status of dalits and ameliorate their financial condition through state financed development means. The idea of a countrywide debate on the issue of conversion moved by the Prime Minister Vajpayee may yield beneficial result

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63 The Tribune. January 12, 1999, Chandigarh
but it may also kick up much heat and dust.\textsuperscript{64}

From time to time, many controversial issues were raised by the BJP and Sangh Parivar in India. In 1998 BJP manifesto committed the party to amend the Article 30 of the constitution of India to remove any scope of discrimination against any religious community. The matter of taking up this issue\textsuperscript{65} in a three days conference on hidden agenda of B.J.P. and Sangh Parivar was organized in December 1998 by Mulri Manohar Joshi, the Human Resource Development Minister of India against the minority communities. The education Ministers of various states were called to discuss the new education policy and make the changes in it. In his speech, Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi stated that the present education system in British legacy, founded up the principles laid down by Lord Maculay which had the characteristics of western bias and elitist.\textsuperscript{66} Therefore the need of the hour is the Indianisation of education. The conference of State Education Ministers rejected the B.J.P. agenda for injecting Hindutatva values in education.\textsuperscript{67} Akali Dal and All India Anna D.M.K. strongly opposed the agenda. All the political parties forced withdrawal of this proposal. In fact the agenda was related to the teachings of the Vedas and Upanishadas. The main purpose of teaching was to give teeth to the Hindutva and also counter the dehinduisation programme of Christians school and protected India's culture and heritage.\textsuperscript{68} Saffronisation of education is a new strategy of Hindus. It is also latest strategy to spread the revivalism of Hinduism in India. The ultimate agenda of R.S.S. is related to the following things:

\textsuperscript{64} The Tribune January 12, and 1999.

\textsuperscript{65} Thampu, Velson (1999) "Religion and Politics : Minorities and the Regeneration of the Mainstream, Published by Media House, Delhi, p. 147.

\textsuperscript{66} The Hindustan Times, October 25, 1998, New Delhi.

\textsuperscript{67} Maşih, Sansar, November 15, 1998, Jalandhar.

\textsuperscript{68} The Asian Age, October 23, 1998.
(a) Vedas are a part of curriculum from primary to high school. The teaching of Sanskrit as a compulsory language from Class III to Class X.

(b) The proposal to amend the article 29 and 30 of the Constitution which provide protection and aid to the minority communities.\textsuperscript{69}

(c) RSS will counter the dehinduisation programs of Christian schools and protect India’s culture and heritage.

( ) To include the biographies of early R.S.S. leaders like K.S. Hegdewar and M.S. Galwalkarin in place of biographies and writings of Nehru and Gandhji in history text books.

( ) Christian schools to be forced to shut down. In U.P. the state government (BJP) has decided to constitute a committee to scrutinize the working of these institutions.

( ) School syllabus will be based on Hindu ideology.

Alwin Pinto\textsuperscript{70} expressed his views that the Hindu fundamentalists are very systematically trying to introduce their agenda in the field of education. This is dangerous to the country’s unity and integrity.\textsuperscript{71} The Christian leaders have the opinion that suffronisation of education only for political gains one side and on the other side to limit the Christian values and teaching of Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{72}


\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., pp. 43-43.

\textsuperscript{72} Dr. Joseph D’Souza was delivering a lecture in a Seminar which was organized by All India Christian Council on September 11, 2002, Chandigarh.
On the other side, the RSS Save Sangh Chalak K.S. Sudarshan mooted the notion for *Saffronising Christianity* and to establish an indigenous church on the lines of the church for India Christians. According to Sudarshan, there is need to have an Indian National Church for the Indian Christians. China has established a separate church for Chinese Christians and recognized it as the National Church, while throwing all other foreign churches out of the country. That is why China refused to permit the Pope to organise a conversion of Asian Bishops in China."

He also stated that soon the country is going to see "Christian Priests in Khaki Uniforms, Saffron flags will be seen fluttering on the roofs of Churches and Crosses will have a fresh look with Trishula on the top of them. The Church prayers will be in pure Sanskrit. Alters will be replaced by havankunds. Desi ghee and cow milk will take the places of bread and wine of offerings in mass".

He divided the *Sudarshanised Church* into two branches (1) sarkari and (2) private, (on the lines of the Chinese model patriotic and underworld churches). Sudarshan borrowed this ideal model from the communist China although communism is on the top of the hit list of the RSS. He also expressed that a new version of Christianity is in the offing. The Bible will be rewritten by the scholars of the Human Resource Development (HRD) Ministry. The crucifixion of Jesus will be re-enacted in Ladak in the form of Prajapati-Yaga described in the Rigveda and the Holy sepulture will be invented in Kashmir. The new Pope will be a RSS nominee backed by BJP, VHP, BD and SJM company. (By Parivar Sangh) The seat of the pope will be in Varanasi. A new

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74 *The Times of India* October 3, 2000, Chandigarh and also see Anoop Dev, "We want Chinese Model!", see in *Indian Currents: A Voice for the Voiceless* Vol. XII, Issue 42, October 22, 2000, New Delhi, pp. 20-23.
Christian theology based on vedanta and Puranas will be formulated by the RSS. VHP ideologues and a new brand of Christian Priests will be trained in RSS. Akhadas. Further he also said in his speech that special Desh Bhakti cell will be set up under the patronage of American NRI's. These department will issue certificates of patriotism, and those who are caught not holding the patriotic and cultural mainstream certificate will be collected and thrown into the holy gangas for purification. 75

The unsolicited ‘advice’ of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh Chief, K.S. Sudarshan, has proffered to the Christian community in India that it should establish a ‘Swadeshi church’, indicates both superciliousness and patronage. The main idea of Sudarshan is to protect Hindutva and destroy other ideologies and faiths. By taking up this issue 76 the Catholic Bishop's conference of India, commented that K.S. Sudarshan has challenged not only constitutional guarantee of freedom of faith, but has sought to interfere directly in the internal affairs of several religions, including Christianity. The Secretary General, CBCI Archbishop Oswald Gracias said that such statements repeated over a period of time, threaten peace and national solidarity by attempting to create unnecessary divisions between people and sowing seeds of division between communities. He also added that Christianity in India is twenty centuries old. No one has the right to question the patriotism of the Indian Christians. He also expressed that the Christian Community of this land do not want the certificate to prove their patriotism 77 because Christ has already taught them to “give to Caesar what belongs to

75 See The Times of India’s, October 3 and 8, 2000. Sudarshan addressed the R.S.S. Volunteers at a Vijaydarshni function organized by the Organisation’s Delhi Unit in Raja Garden. Speech was also quoted by R.S.S. official organization Hindi Panchayana and English Language Organiser, October 15, 2000. New Delhi.


77 Ibid. p. 24.
Caesar and give to God what belongs to God". As long as the law of the land is not against the natural or divine laws, every Christian is bound to obey that law. The senior Congress leader Arjun Singh has spoken in the favour of community and has said that “the Christians have made immense contribution towards development of the country and that no one can question their patriotism.”

The 'Justification' for its anti-Christian campaign was based on the charge of coerced and enticed conversion resorted to by the missionaries. In a subtle charge of track, the RSS Chief has brought in the "Swadesh" concept and sought to portray the "foreign churches" as the villain since they involved themselves in disruptive and divisive activities. There could not be a more sweeping and irresponsible allegation than this, since it is an irrefutable fact that the Christian missionaries have, over the decades, done a commendable social service in the areas of education and health, for instance.

The exclusion of churches from the list of places of worship was planned by the Delhi's BJP government in June, 1998. Delhi government had recommended, in writing, in 1998 that churches should be removed from the list of religious places and then the Chief Minister Sahib Singh Verma had endorsed this suggestion. Actually, in May 1998, the capital catholic churches had applied for a permit to procure 20,000 litres of wine from Goa. Gupta granted the permit with a rider that churches be excluded from the list of religious places for granting of Excise License since wine is distributed there. Father George Pereiva, spokesman for the Catholic Bishop Conference of India (CBCI), said in the statement, “A church is a religious place, a place of worship and denotifying it will rob it of its deep rooted sanctity.”

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78 Ibid. p. 21.
79 The Hindu, October, 10, 2000, New Delhi.
80 Indian Express, July 2, 1998, Chandigarh.
81 Ibid.
A press note, issued by the Indian Christian Welfare Association (Regd.) regarding the correct position about the Sacramental Wine is reproduced below. 82

1. According to Christian tradition, Christ served wine and bread during the Lord Supper. Therefore He commended His disciples to continue this tradition as remembrance of God. It is Sacramental wine is served at every service of Holy Communion. This wine is symbolic of blood of Jesus Christ and his body as bread. At every mass the priest dips the bread in the wine and offers it to the congregation. 83

0. Sacramental wine is not liquor. It is refined quality of grape – juice (wine) prepared through a process of repeated filtration and preservation specially meant for use at the time of Holy Communion, the most pious religious Sacrament of the Christian tradition (Shariat).

0. it is not at all like IMFL (Indian Made Foreign Liquor) and as such does not affect like whisky etc. The whiskey served in clubs and bars should not be compared with the use of Sacramental wine in the churches at the time of holy-Communion.

0. Drinking of liquor is a social habit but use of Sacramental wine is not a social habit. It is the holiest part of the Christian worship.

0. The Sacramental wine symbolizes the blood of Christ and bread His body. It is given for the redemption of mankind from the sin.

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The issue of Sacramental wine was also raised in the parliament. Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee assured the house that the decision will not be implemented. He also expressed that "we feel that this is a deep rooted design to defame Christianity." 

In India, Christians face double discrimination first as dalits in general and secondly, on the basis of religion. They are denied their fundamental constitutional rights which are linked with the question of human rights and reservations. B.J.P. and Sangh Parivar also opposed the reservations move for the Dalit Christians in India. During the Congress regime, Sita Ram Kesari, the Union Welfare Minister took the initiative to move the quota reservation for the Dalit Christians. But B.J.P. and Parivar opposed this move. Suraj Bhan President of the All India Schedule Castes and Scheduled Tribes Manch of BJP organized a rally at New Delhi to oppose the reservation and said in a statement that "Congress wanted to please the Christians to get their votes though they did not fall in the category of Scheduled Castes because as per provisions of the Constitution they were not socially or educationally backward. He has further added that if the government extended the benefit of reservations to Christians, it will jeopardise the interests of the Scheduled Caste and the Scheduled Tribes. The Supreme Court has already ruled that reservation in jobs could not be permitted to exceed 50 percent. It meant that if the government provided reservation for Christians, it would cut the quota of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. It would also be a shot in the arm to the anti-conversion movement. 

A rally was organized by BJP on Ramlila ground in New Delhi on Sept. 2, 1996. Their target was the Dalit Christians and the Bill granting

84 Masihi Sansar, July 1998, Jallandhar.
86 Ibid.
privileges and reservation to dalit Christians equal to Scheduled Castes. B.J.P. leader Atal Bihari Vajpayee threatened that if the bill was passed, they would take the struggle to the streets.87 L.K. Advani also charged the Congress with initiating the move to extend reservation to dalit Christians and accused the United Front Government of wanting to exploit the sentiment of Christians dalits for creating a vote bank. Advani also stated that in 1946 the Constituent Assembly had made a provision for reservation for all communities in the draft. "But the minority committee opposed the proposal and recommended that reservation should extend to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes only."88 It must be pointed out that all the minority communities and their leaders voluntarily gave up electoral reservation which was based on their Minority status. The Christians were the prime movers of this decision.

The secular political parties e.g. Congress claimed that they are working for the poor that they want to banish poverty; that they want to bring about equality and social justice in society. But very little of all this is seen happening. Congress always made promises in every general election but failed to implement the very genuine demand of the Christian community. During the regime of Narashima Rao, Congress Party moved the Reservation bill for Dalit Christians in India without the prior permission of Lok Sabha Speaker and the bill was rejected by the speaker. Actually it was only as eye wash to capture the votes of the dalits. After this rejection, the Congress Party recommended to the Hon’ble President of India to issue an ordinance for the reservation. But the President of India, Shankar Dyal Sharma took the right decision by rejecting this move of Congress Party because the next coming general election had already been declared by the Election Commission of India.


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IV

CONSTITUTIONAL PROBLEMS OF CHRISTIANS

The principle of non-discrimination and the concept of common citizenship is enshrined in all provisions of the Indian constitution. The first and the foremost is the Right to Equality (Article 14) which is an extension of the rights ensured in the preamble to the Constitution. Article 14 of our constitution says “The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law and shall provide equal protection for every person within the territory of India.” Article, 12 of constitution explains the word, “the state” in Article 14 as “The government and Parliament of India and the government and the legislature of each of the state and all local or other authorities within the territory of India or under the control of the government of India.” This provision embodies a concept which is a hallmark of democracy. However, to the question whether the Indian Christians in India really do enjoy this fundamental right to equality, the answer, unfortunately, is ‘no’. Because in real sense, Indian Christians do not fully enjoy some of the basic fundamental rights. The major problems faced by the Christians with regard to fundamental rights are as given below.

The discrimination on grounds of religion is very clearly prohibited by Article 15 of our constitution which says in clause (1). “The state shall not discriminate against any citizens on grounds of religion, race, caste, gender, place of birth etc.” This fundamental right against discrimination on ground of religion is one of the most important rights for the flourishing of any religiously pluralistic society as we have in our country. But unfortunately, we are till now unable to implement what Article 15 lays down. This mandate of "non-discrimination against any person on grounds of religion" given in

88 Ibid. p. 2

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Article 15 of the Constitution has still not been enforced totally, even though the Constitution was promulgated more than 50 years ago. This might, in whatever little extent, which existed before promulgation of constitution was lost when our constitution came into being.

The third paragraph of the Presidential order of 1950 was amended by the Parliament to extend the constitution benefits to the ‘Sikhs’ and the ‘Buddhists’ along with the ‘Hindus’. Regarding the criteria of amendment, the point made by Ram Vilas Paswan in 1990 needs to be noted. Paswan, who was the then Union Minister of Welfare and Labour, while stating the objects and reasons for proposing to include Buddhists of Scheduled Caste origin in the list of Scheduled Castes, said that the change of religion does not alter social and economic conditions. But above all the third paragraph of the 1950 Presidential order is a direct contradiction of Article 15 and 25 of our Constitution since it had used religion as the criterion to describe who will be a schedule caste. This needs to be deleted completely. 89

In India the opportunities for employment are very scanty and the state is the greatest employer. The principle of non discrimination and equality is also upheld in matter of public employment in the Constitution Art 16 says “No citizen shall, on grounds of religion, race or caste, be ineligible for, or discriminated against in respect of, any employment or office under the State.

The Constitution of our country in Article 16, gives equality of opportunity in matters of public employment. But, again, because of the Presidential order, of 1950 and the refusal of Shanker Dyal Sharma to issue ordinance 90 for reservation for Christians during the regime of Narashima Rao, and the two amendments thereto after, referred to above, Dalit this fundamental right Christians have been deprived of rights. This has been made available to the Dalits in the fold of Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism. This


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also amounts to discrimination on grounds of religion which the ‘state’ is forbidden to do under Article 15.

The denial of Justice to the dalit Christians is also against the letter and spirit of Articles 14, 15, 16 and 25 of the Constitution of India on equal justice, equal opportunities and freedom of religion. If a Scheduled Caste becomes a Christian he loses all the reservation facilities, and if he produces a certificate of Schedule Caste he gets back all the benefits. Even the children of the same scheduled caste parents, living under the same roof, sharing the same meals are discriminated against on the basis of religion. Sohan Singh, gets all the reservation facilities. While his own brother Mohan Masih is denied all the benefits just because “Masih” happens to be a Christian. It is a bad luck, if any Christian symbol is noticed with him/her or at his/her residence. He/she loses all the service benefits. It is also violation of the constitutional rights. Despite of 57 years of independent, the dalit Christians continued to be the victims of all kinds of treatment. The history of independent India is both pathetic and shameful on the treatment meted out to Dalits.

The Mandal Commission’s report has unambiguously stated that state assistance should be given to all genuinely backward sections of people irrespective of religion or caste which many thought would end the discrimination against the poor among the minorities. But the ‘soft’ communists or secularists or religious fanatics in the majority community are now said to have found another excuse to deprive the Christians of these facilities. The argument advanced is that the backwards having un-Indian sounding or Anglo-Saxon” names cannot claim such benefits. They can afford to discriminate against Christians in this manner because they are a negligible “vote bank”. This is the way our rulers create divisions, frictions

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90 See Editorial “Well Done, Mr. President”, in The Tribune, March 29, 1996, Chandigarh.
and differences in our country\textsuperscript{92}.

The other serious implication of the Presidential order of 1950 is that it has also affected another fundamental right of the Dalit Christians, which is meant to protect their personal life as well as liberty. In the last 57 years of India's independence, the country's three largest minorities, Muslims, Christians and Sikhs – have been targeted by fanatics of the majority community and other vested interests, on the basis of their religious identity alone, resulting in a serious assault on their basic rights, including the right of life itself Article 21 of the Indian constitution clearly stipulates”. "No person shall be deprived of his right of personal liberty except according to procedure established by law”. The example of the Dalit Christians not getting protection of life and personal liberty are the various govt. acts and rules passed by the Parliament to give special protection to the scheduled castes which are not applicable to the Christians of Scheduled Caste origin during atrocities. These acts and rules include protection of civil rights Act 1955, Protection of Civil Rights Rule, 1977 and Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989. All these acts and rules are supposed to give the SC (Dalits) special protection and rights against various kinds of atrocities and oppressions, meted out to them by the people of so-called upper castes of forward classes. But this protection is not made available to Dalit Christians.

\textit{Although under Article 21, the State is bound to protect the life and liberty of every human being, but it has failed to protect this right. There are a lot of violations. Such type of violations threatens the very right to life, physical integrity and health of citizens.} Here are some of the headlines in the national media. “Persecution – Christians are now being systematically

\textsuperscript{91} Sarto, Esteves (1996) Nationalism, Secularism and Communalism, South Asia Publications, Delhi, p. 190.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid, p. 190.
targeted." It referred to the recent move of the then B.J.P. run Delhi government to denotify churches in Delhi as places of worship on the ground that wine was served there" "Saffron Brigade strikes again in Gujarat." "Christian missionary school attacked, copy of New Testament burnt" flashed Hindustan Times on July 22nd 199893.

*Article 25 of Indian constitution gives full right to all citizens the "freedom of conscience and to right freely to profess practice and propagate religion".* The Christians have almost always faced problems with this fundamental right specially with the last part of propagating its faith. A number of states such as Orissa, Arunachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh have passed acts through their legislature severely curbing this right. In many states like Punjab, the concerned authorities refused to allow any venue and date for religious conversions or religious conventions for preaching the teaching of Jesus Christ. It is entirely a violation of Article 25. Father T.K. John also expressed the feeling that the basic rights of the religious minorities are violated in a number of ways94.

(a) Although some Indian state government did enact legislations entitled 'Freedom of Religion Bill'; they were full of ambiguities which were utilized by the state machinery to practise discrimination against religious minorities.

(b) Refusal to grant official recognition, to certain religious groups and religious communities.

(c) Legal bias against certain religion groups and religious communities

93 John, T.K.(July 22,1998) op. cit. p. 178 and also see The Hindustan Times, New Delhi.

Restriction on public information about religious groups by describing only a preferred religion in official textbooks and ignoring the others. In Gujarat, the state BJP government is also trying to impose some limitation on freedom of conscience and free profession.

Although the Article 25 of the Indian constitution gives a wide opportunity to profess, practice and propagate any religion, but from time to time it has been mis-interpreted by the various Hon’ble Courts of law which have imposed many limitations. As the Supreme Court held in the case of stainless vs. Madhya Pradesh (1977), the right to propagate does not mean the right to convert others forcibly. However, he is entitled to accept or adopt another religion by his own choice and free will.3

In recent times, some Hindu organizations have raised a hue and cry over this matter, and are in favour of adding some amendments in the Article 25. As L.K. Maitra said in the constituent assembly “The very foundation of society in Indian being religion, it will lose all her spiritual values and heritage unless the right to practice and propagate any religion was recognized as a fundamental right.” But the states were practical enough to make it a conditional right. So, when propagation affects the religious sentiments of other communities or conversion involve some sort of force or fraud, it goes against the letter and spirit of the constitution.96

An attempt was made in 1977, during the regime of Janta Government through private bill at Central level for prohibition of conversion which, of course, could not get through. In July 2001, Anant Gangaram Geete, a Shiv Sena M.P., moved a private bill named the prohibition on religious conversion


96 Ibid., p. 3565.
bill, 2001" in the Lok Sabha. The Bill was opposed by the opposition and Sangh Parivar failed to muster enough support for it to get through. Besides the above, the Christian Evangelists and Church workers kept on facing opposition in practicing and propagating their faith. They were also, attacked physically many times and harassed by the fanatic groups in a number of states such as Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, U.P., Maharashtra and Punjab. In December 1999, non Christians organized a rally at Ahwa in Dangs district in Gujarat state on Christmas day projecting the alleged conversion of tribals to Christianity by the missionaries. In Punjab, religious conventions were disturbed at various places by the Sangh Parivar during the Akali-BJP regime. But government did not take a serious note of this problem and even refused to accept the recommendations of National Minority Commission, New Delhi.

Article 26 of our Constitution has given to all the religious minorities the right.
0) to establish and maintain institution for religious and charitable purposes,
0) to manage their own affairs in matters of religion, in any manner they wish to administer and maintain such property in accordance with the law.

In Gujarat, state education department issued a circular to the government aided schools to subscribe to a Gujarati magazine ‘Sadhana’ which is wedded to the ideology of the RSS and Sangh Parivar. This is a direct violation of Article 26 of the Indian Constitution. The violation of Article 26 occurs, when the freedom to establish religious institutions is curbed. The

local administration generally refuses permission to build, enlarge or renovate places of worship of minority religious groups. This has become a major problem for the Christian Community. To get permission for building a Church has become a nightmarish experience for the Christian applicants. The recent destruction of churches in certain parts of the country has further aggravated the threat to the right, guaranteed in Constitution, that the Christian Community, along with other religious communities, has every right to establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes.

Article 29 offers protection of cultural rights of minorities and Article 30 (1) gives them the right to establish and administer education institutions of their choice. Clause 31(2) states that the state “shall not, in granting aid to educational institutions, discriminate against any education institution on the ground that it is under the management of a minority, whether based on religion or language.” But with regard to the rights provided in Articles 29 and 30 also, the Christians continue to face problems throughout the country. The first major problem which the Christian educational institutions are facing is the intervention of State Education Department and Universities at different levels. Questions are being raised whether a special place can be offered to the members of the Christian community as students or trainees. Government not only discriminate against minority schools, colleges, nursing colleges, and hospitals in granting aid, but also impose many rules and restriction to prevent minority institutions from appointing their own candidates. When a vacancy comes up schools and other institutions they are forced to accept the State’s choice and on many occasions the Christian educational institutions have had to go to court to get justice.

100 Ibid, pp. 177-178.
Some of fanatic groups are not in favour of separate and distinct culture for minorities. They want that all minorities in India must group up their separate culture as India is one country and one culture. Prof. Madhok suggested that "That the minorities must adopt Indian (Hindu) names. In short they must adopt the Indian culture – the national culture – in their religion. Their religion should bend its loyalty, towards the Indian Nationalism". The suggestion made by Madhok is totally against the rights guaranteed under Article 29 of the Constitution which says:

"Any section of citizens, residing in the territory of India, or any part thereof, having a distinct language or culture of its own, shall have the right to conserve the same .... all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right to profess, practice and propagate their religion." In fact the Muslims, the Christians and the Sikhs each have their own separate and distinct cultures. The above guarantee given by the Constitution negates the right to conserve the culture of the minorities. Such utterances have been in vogue for many decades. It is a shame that the leaders of the largest democracy, with large number of religions allow the propagation of such mindless thoughts (which are clearly against the constitutional rights) against such minuscule position of the population as the Christians.

The next problem is concerning the Christians personal law which includes.

0) The Indian Christian Marriage Act 1872.

0) The Indian Divorce Act 1869, and

0) The Indian Succession Act 1925.


102 Massey, James op.cit., pp. 70-71.
These acts were enacted under the British Rule and reflects the British point of view. Some contents and acts have direct relationship to the English law and the Courts. For example, section VIII of the Indian Divorce Act 1869 says that for anything uncovered by this act, the Indian courts shall follow the procedure of English Courts. Similarly the Christian Marriage Act, 1872 has, at a number of places, references to the Churches of England and Scotland.

The Indian Succession Act, 1925 also has a number of weak points. This includes the restrictions imposed on a widow’s right to property. All these discrepancies need immediate attention of both, the Indian Christians as well as the Indian government in order to introduce suitable amendments to these Acts. The Christian Law is biased in circumstances of marriage, grounds for divorce, demand for damages and equitable relief. The need for a change has been widely recognised.

The campaign for changes in the Christian Personal Laws was taken up at the Joint Women’s Programme (JWP) in 1983. Through several meetings held in different places, where Bishops, Clergy, Lawyers, the laity of the churches and social activists participated, it came to a unanimous conclusion that the Christian Personal Laws, as enacted and administered in India, was out dated, unjust and did not fairly meet the needs of the present generation. The Indian Christian Marriage Act 1872, the Indian Divorce Act 1869 and the Indian Succession Act 1925 had several sections that were discriminatory. The first two of these Acts were enacted more than a century ago and the third one also almost three quarters of century age. Women suffer and are treated differently than men. There is also a need to enable Christians to adopt children whenever the need arises.

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104 Ibid. pp. 3-4.
The Joint Women's Programme (JWP) along with the church of North India drafted a new Christian Marriage and maintenance Bill in 1985 with help of P.M. Bakshi the then Member of Law Commission. The Joint Women's Programme also requested all the churches to send in their consensus opinion and the Christian Marriage and Matrimonial Bill 1990, the Indian Succession Amendment Bill 1990, and the Christian Adoption and Maintenance Bill 1990 were formulated. Thereafter an economic committee for changes in Christian personal law was formed. This committee studied the 1992 Bill and a draft was finalized to change the existing acts covering marriage, divorce, succession and adoption. It also drafted a Christian Adoption Law 1994. (See Appendices IV) All these were the “Christian Marriage Bill”. This draft made possible, the solution of cases of divorce on the grounds of cruelty by mutual consent and did away with compulsion of restoration of conjugal rights. The Church leadership raised its voice to bring its changes in the Bill. The fourth law commission studied the matter in its own free time. Matters moved in the late nineties and James Massey a former member of National Commission of Minorities played a part in the formulation of another reformist draft which was submitted to government in 1997 to replace the existing acts covering marriage, divorce, succession and adoption.105

In April 2000, the Law Minister invited some church leaders and women activists to discuss his proposed Christian Marriage Bill 2000. The Christian representatives demanded that if the Law Minister kept sections 3 and 9 the same were as stated in the Bill of 1994, the proposed bill will have consensus of all churches, throughout India. They would agree for the Bill 2000 to be introduced in Parliament. This bill prepared by Law Ministry with

the consent of community was passed by the Parliament in 2001. The Christians take the Indian Constitution for granted to provide, protect and safeguard the fundamental rights of every citizen and every minority, including the Christians. However, the relevance and effectiveness of the safeguards is eroding fast due to large scale saffronisation of education system, created by the Sangh Pariwar to enforce its political ideology. These changes are fearless and bold enough to dream of saffronisation of all Minority communities also. Some organizations of the Sangh Pariwar are so eager to erode the very existence of the minority communities that they are moving in extremely disruptive directions. These moves, sooner or later, will jeopardize the fundamental rights of the minority communities. The political thinking of the communal forces is moving in a direction of formation of theocratic state, in which the goal and religion of Sangh Pariwar becomes a supreme force. This is creating a helpless situation for minority communities especially the poor and downtrodden dalit Christians. The apathy of administration, violation of minorities rights, Presidential Order of 1950 and Mandal Commission report have created an extremely helpless and frustrating situation for minority community of Christians. The Christians just want a fair system to fulfill their basic needs and a chance to live an honourable life which can only be provided by institutionalization of minority rights ignored and those of Christian minority in particular.

V

The Problems Of The Christian Community In The Punjab State

The problems of the minorities are not confined to any specific region and are in fact universal in scope, though it varies in nature and extent, according to the peculiar circumstances of place and time, on various

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combinations of powers and the relative strength of the minority and the majority communities. In this context, besides the general problems faced by Christian community, there are certain specific problems faced by the Community in Punjab. The socio-economic, religious and political problems of Christians community in the Punjab State are follows:

(0) **Social problems** (a) Social status (b) Untouchability (c) Educational inability (d) Separate residences (e) Identity crisis.

(0) **Economic Problems** (a) working as bonded labourers (b) Deplorable economic conditions.

(0) **Religious Problems** (a) The discrimination on the ground of religion (b) Right to propagate religion (c) Atrocities on Christians.

(0) **Political Problems** (a) Lack of unity (b) Lack of dynamic leadership (c) Lack of a political front.

I. Being a dalit Christian: discrimination and degradation.

In Punjab, Christian dalits live in the same kind of villages (*Basties or Thathi*), are dependent on the same kind of land owners, suffer the same kind of disparities and atrocities, are subject to the same social and economic pressure and face equally limited opportunities for occupational opportunities as do other rural dalits. Apart from the large number of social restrictions and compulsions, the Punjabi dalits also suffer great harassment, physically, socially and economically.

Harassment against Dalit Christians in Punjab occurs mostly due to their economic weakness, vulnerability and dependence on the rural power structure for their survival. The economic backwardness of the Christian community is aggravated by socio economic disabilities and lack of political

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107 Subhash, Manju, *op. cit.* p. 182.
influence. The border area of Punjab (district Gurdaspur, Amritsar and Ferozepur) have deplorable conditions. The rural poverty groups are ruthlessly exploited by the well to do landowners, who have near monopoly of political, economic and social power in larger parts of these areas.

The status of a person in Indian society is, at present determined on the basis of his birth in a particular caste or community, his socio-economic position and social interaction with others. In Punjab, Christians have worse conditions and status than the Schedule Castes. A change of religion has not cleaned their scar. People from this caste are still connected with their previous castes. They are still known as "untouchable", particularly among the traditional and old people of the society. Inspite of their conversion to Christianity, they suffer serious discrimination and degradation in society. Their untouchable caste root is the primary reason for their continued socio-economic discrimination and disabilities.

Although their conversion to Christianity was to protest against the obnoxious caste system and though they had joined the church seeking liberation and solace in the new community, the church has not only failed to fulfil their expectations but even discriminationed against them, not only in Punjab but also at national level. The Central and state governments have further aggravated their condition by denying them protection against discrimination. With the Constitution (SC) Order, 1950 and Mandal Commission Report, The Centre and State governments have created a deep and serious crisis in their lives. The very fact that if one is supporting a Cross, or a Christian or 'Biblical' name, one is automatically debarred from availing of scheduled caste benefits in Punjab. It is indeed alarming for the community. Inspite of obstacles and hardships, the Christians are still continuing to try and secure schedule caste benefits through 'whatever way' possible though very few of them actually succeed in this.
Today, Punjab has given a lot of facilities to the schedule caste people but these facilities are not meant for economically weaker section like Dalit Christians. These Christians are often harassed and discriminated against on religious grounds. It is difficult for them to get any facilities from the government authorities. The concerning officers know the poor conditions of the community. They are always ignoring their basic problems.

Identity is a quality of a individual or a group. It's development is part of the general process of personal maturity and it must be viewed as such from psychological as well as sociological perspective. In psychological sense it is an emotional group feeling which gets developed over a period of time. In its sociological sense, identity refers to process by which we place ourselves in the network of social relationship. Regarding the identity of the Christians, they claim that community is 'one in Jesus Christ' in India but usually do not assume an overall religious identity. They are highly fractionated, not only denominationally but also linguistically. Thus their identities are crystallized either as Catholics or the Protestants. But they neither have a common language throughout the country, nor a distinct style of life. Various sections of Christians have widened the gap amongst themselves while believing in closeness.

In Punjab also the Christian Community is divided into groups: the Catholic group and the Protestant group. They do not have much cooperation on any issue. But the members of both the groups have a desire to make unity amongst themselves, because they have the same problem and same style of the life. Identity crisis is the main problems for community. Sources of Christians in Punjab are constrained to use dual identity. When they need an admission or a job in a Christians school or hospitals, they claim their

\[108\] See in detail in Chapter No. III.
Christian identity, but when they look for a government job, they uphold their caste as Hindu. This is creating a crisis in the younger generation of the Christian Community and this section of Christians has started having symptoms of low esteem.

The young generation has started adopting names as well as surnames that do not resemble with the Christian traditional names. The surnames like Randhawa, Bhatti, Gill, Brar, Sidhu etc. are used by the Christians but these are the sub castes (gotra) of Jat Sikhs in Punjab. This testifies the thesis that the young generation, whenever they can, interact with non-Christians and are feeling inferior to them. Hence the adoption of other names.

In Punjab, Christians do not have their own separate identity, traditions and cultural values. Actually, the dominant majority either Sikhs or Hindus, generally powerful also, are attempting to impose its own religious or culture values on the powerless Christian Community. They are suffering from the stigmatized identity of their having remained untouchables and foreigner. The Indian constitution treats untouchability a Hindu phenomenon and dalit Christians, except Sikhs, were debarred from advantages of reservations. They also occasionally felt guilty about their being dalit, especially when they had to face various types of prejudices and discriminations of non-Christians. A section of Christians have now begun to identify themselves as Christian dalits. They have launched a movement although not widespread, demanding benefits of reservations, similar to that of the Hindu Scheduled Castes. Secondly, Christians have been considered as foreigners in own motherland and looked upon with suspicion throughout the country. They have experienced in the past that there is discrimination on religious grounds and they stand no chance in comparison to other religions.

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Another problem of the Community is the worse condition of Christian graveyards. This is also one of the major problems, particularly in the rural areas. In many villages, the Christian community has no provision of graveyards. The Punjab government and the leaders of the community do not pay any attention towards this problem. Most of the Christians even, do not seem to be serious about the graveyards. In many villages Christians graveyards are being used for storing site where skeletons of dead animals are collected for further disposal. Due to shortage of land, many of the organized Christians are not allowing the burial of the dead bodies of newly converted people belonging to un-organized Christians in Punjab. Hamid Masih, president of Punjab Christians Movement (PCM) also stated that the Christians of Punjab are facing this problem and sometimes the landlord do not allow them to carry the dead body through their fields and at many places, the landlords have cultivated their graveyard for agriculture purpose poor Christians do not dare speak against them, nor do they approach the concerned authority. Many Christian organizations like Indian Christians Welfare Association, Punjab Christians Movement and Punjab Christians Front etc. have approached the National Minority Commission and State government to allot land for graveyards in rural areas.

II. Discrimination at the hands of landlord/government/ upper class Christians.

One of the most important factors which determine the social status of any individual or group of individuals relate to their economic conditions. Depressed economic conditions always lead to illiteracy, social immobility, loss of self-respect and this eventually affect the development of the human personality. This is particularly so in the case of the backward and weaker

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110 Masih, Hamid (July 5, 2003) President, Punjab Christian Movement (PCM) expressed his views about the conditions of graveyards in Punjab is an interview on, Jalandhar.
section of the society like the Christians in Punjab who are regularly engulfed in socio-economic problems.

In Punjab, Christian are economically powerless and needy. The common tendency found among Christians particularly in the border/ rural Christian community, is to look upon the Church/ mission as an agency or place which gives them help. Seldom do Christians take risk or undertake new ventures. They want the church to establish schools, hostels and hospitals which can provide them jobs. Many times the policy or structure of the mission/church encourages this dependence of members on the church particularly in the border areas.

The rural Christians population of Punjab is mostly dependent on the landlords/ Zamidar/Brick-kilns owners for their daily needs. Sometimes, they have to borrow money for their needs but it is impossible for them to return the borrowed amount along with the high interest accrued. The landlord always exploits the Christian dalit debtors by forcing them to work in the field houses or mandi or force them to work in brick kilns as a bonded labour. Because landlords are politically very powerful and a well organized class in Punjab with a significant presence in the police, army and bureaucracy, this system of bonded labour continues even today.

The growing economic deprivation of Dalit Christians, especially the debt trap in which most of them are perennially caught up has helped forced labour to persist extensively, particularly in the rural village of Punjab. Rural indebtedness which is a serious problem of the people in general has a serious impact on the socio-economically backwards like dalit Christians. Unlimited borrowing for crossing to their repaying capacity is a routine feature of the community. Lack of institutional credit facilities affected their social life particularly in the case of labours and also gave birth to an obnoxious system of forced and bonded labour in Punjab.
Sometimes, in rural area of Punjab, Christian children are forced by circumstances, to do labour at a tender age when they should be in schools as children are required to be. This has manifold repercussions, not only for their families but for the society as a whole. It is a well known fact that poverty, illiteracy, ignorance, unemployment of parents and social backwardness are all responsible for this malaise. M.N. Sivaprakasam pointed out in his study “The child labour is no longer a medium of economic exploitation but is necessitated by economic necessities of the parents in many cases.”

The powerful people of the society i.e. landlords exploit them economically: engage them at low rate of wages, to make them work without wages, and to make them work against their will are some of the maltreatments prevalent in the society even today. This is the plight of dalit Christians of Punjab in border areas.

Today, Punjab state has given a lot of facilities to the Scheduled Caste e.g. allotment of land for landless, loans for construction of houses, loans for setting up business, industry, poultry and leather works etc. But these facilities are not meant for economically weaker section i.e. Punjabi Christian community. Christians are often harassed and discriminated against on religious grounds by the State Government. The government official always hesitate to give the benefits to the poor Christians, because they already know about the poor-socio economic conditions of the community. Administrative apathy, unemployment among Christian youth, attitude of landlord class and discrimination by upper class Christians with dalit Christians in Punjab is posing a serious threat to the dalit Christians.

Depressed and deplorable economic condition of the community in Punjab is a pointer toward a crucial time for the community. Community is

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111 Sivaprakasam, M.N. op. cit., p. 274.
facing social, economic educational and cognitive deprivation. All these social conditions deprives the individuals of opportunities and consequently restrict the optimal development of cognitive, emotional and behavioural spheres of their personality. The stereotyped presentation of negative images of the dalit Christians in the minds of other castes, create harmful effects on their self-respect. The Christians are poor and branded scheduled castes and scheduled tribe SCs/STs on embracing Christianity. But their economic conditions has not and does not change on becoming Christians. Their religious beliefs may have changed, but their economic conditions have not changed as a result. The official policy in this regard is an injustice to the community. It is discriminative for claiming to be Christians and not Hindus.

The backwardness of a community is neither a social stigma nor a handicap. It is the politicians chartered vehicle to power. Christians in Punjab deserve to be helped to come up in life. The politicians/Landlord and bureaucrats belonging to the majority community can, however change the interpretation of law to suit their decisions, however strange, biased and illogical they may be. They have advanced the argument that there is no caste system in Christianity and since the facilities given to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are granted because they belong to the low Status, the Christians cannot claim these facilities. It is true that there is no caste system in Christianity, but the facilities given to the weaker section in our country are because they are economically, socially and educationally backward and poor and not because of their caste which, in any case, has been abolished. Nehru said in November 1950 in a written statement “All State aids and facilities are to be given not only to the Hindu Scheduled Castes but also to all other educationally and socially backward classed whether they process Hinduism, Christianity or any other religion.” But the question is, how much the state is

\[\text{Sarto, Esteves, op.cit., pp. 188-89.}\]
successful in this object and whether really the weaker section of society is satisfied.

III. Religious Problems

In general, the major problem of the community is right to propagate religion including missionary activities in the various places of Punjab State. Religious functions and conventions were disturbed by the fanatic people during the regime of Akali B.J.P. government (1997-2002), at various places of Punjab like Ludhiana, Jalandhar, Bathinda, Phagawara, Pathankot, Nabha, Patiala and Ropar.

As is evident from the recent spate of atrocities on Christians in various parts of Punjab, fanatic people have come out in the open to justify theses barbaric assaults. At various places, the religious conventions disturbed, priests and religious activists have been tortured and the copies of the ‘Holy Bible’ were burnt and also misbehaved the Christians priests at various cities of the Punjab.

On Oct. 27, 1997 a major problem came with direct atrocities on the religious minority of the Christians at Ludhiana. A large religious convention in the city of Ludhiana was organised by the Christians on October 23-27-1997. James Messey, a member of National Commission for Minority (NCM) was invited as a chief guest in this convention. More than one lac people at the convention about 20000 were Christians and more than 80,000 belonged to the other faiths. Some of the activist of Bajrang Dal & Shiv Sena created the disturbance with the help of police. They also forced to administration to announce the change of the venue. The police on the advise of Shiv Sena announced on the final that of the convention would not be allowed to take place.

The Christian youth started protesting against this announcement. The
police in turn started torturing and beating Christians and even firing on them. The leaders of the Christian convention wrote a complaint of the happenings to the National Commission for minorities (NCM). The NCM sent an enquiry commission consisting of three persons Prof. Bawa Singh, Vice-Chairman, Dr. James Massey, and Fr. John Dayal a senior journalist. The commission conducted a full fledged enquiry and found that the district administration had completely failed to give protection to the Christians. The commission also found that both the civil administration headed by the District Magistrate as well as police officers at various levels had failed to stop Shiv Sena and Bajrang Dal atrocities. District Magistrate took a biased decision and took the side of Bajrang Dal and Shiv Sena.

**Recommendations:**

The Enquiry Commission therefore, made the following recommendation to the state government:

(a) The District Magistrate should be transferred immediately.

(b) The incidents of torture by the police should be investigated in detail and criminal charges registered against the said police officers.

(c) Police cases against arrested Christians must be withdrawn.

(d) Adequate security must be provided for religious functions of various minority communities.

(e) The state authorities must take the minorities into confidence in devising a code of conduct in public religious meetings, rallies and other public celebrations.

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Although the National Minority Commission submitted its report and recommended to the Punjab government to take action against culprits but Akali-BJP government did not take a serious notice of this and not a single recommendation of Commission was accepted by the government. The government tried to pacify the community by nominating a Christians Leader Munawar Masih as a member of Punjab Subordinate Selection of Board, Punjab. The reluctant leaders of the community critised the attitude of the government. On the other side Shiv Sena also organized a rally at Chandigarh against government decision.

The next major religious controversy came when Satnam Singh advocate from Amritsar, wrote a book on “Satguru Nanak Dev Ji” (Sampuran Jivan) In this book, he used derogatory words against Jesus Christ and also gave vulgar remarks on the life of Jesus Christ and Mother Marry. He also wrote that the Christians are immoral who usually spend their life in nude clubs. The author of the book has called the Christians as dokhebaz, makkaar, jalam, dushat, and satan etc.

This publication has hurt the religious feelings of the Christian community and has lowered their reputation in the eyes of the public in general. The Christian community of Punjab took up this issue and appealed to the concerned government of the state to take stern action against, the writer, the manager of publication and Upkar Singh Chhabra owner Prabhat motor who has supported the publication of this book. On behalf of the Christian Community, Pastor, K. Koshy also submitted a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner Ludhianan and in this, he condemned this act of Satnam Singh Advocate and his associates.

This controversy created a lot of tension at various places of Punjab. Many Christian organizations came forward to seek action against Satnam Singh. At various places, the Christian community demonstrated against this
act. The Punjab Christians Movement (PCM) took up this issue and demonstrated at Jalandhar and held up traffic at Amritsar, Fatehgarh Churhia, Dhariwal and Gurdaspur. Father Robi, a well known, Christian Priest and leader of 'Punjab Masih Lok Dal' led the rally and demonstrated against this act. The police arrested many Christian leaders when this issue took serious turn in Punjab. The Punjab government ultimately ordered the ban of this book.

The disturbance of the Christian prayer meetings in north India particularly in Punjab has become a common activity of the fundamentalistic organizations. During the regime of Akali-BJP government, the Christians faced problem to organise the religious function at Jalandhar in Punjab. B.J.P., Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh, Vishwa Hindu Prishad and Bajrang Dal put pressure on the Christians to shift the venue of their religious convention. They also blamed the religion preachers that they are converting the people during the Changai Sabha. The Christian organizations raised the voice in the city for their fundamental right to freedom of expression and sat on dharna outside the office of the Deputy Commissioner, Jallander.

Simranjit Singh Mann a leader of Akali Dal (Mann) also charged the district administration with pressurizing the Christians to shift the venue of their religious convention. but on the other side, Sangh Parviar gave a verbal assurance they would not disturb the prayer meeting which was organized on October 16 to 17, 2001 at Dussehra ground. Both the parties agreed and Christian organization called off their proposed dharna outside the Deputy Commissioner's office and agreed to shift the venue of prayer meeting.

The attacks on the Punjabi Christian community in different parts of Punjab should not leave any one in doubt that at least some of the fundamentalist organizations are preparing a plan and ground for an onslaught on the minority community and also violating and interfering in their
fundamental rights. The following incidents took place in the various parts of Punjab:

(A) FROM 1947 TO DECEMBER 1996

- Nine nuns were manhandled in Amritsar.
- Father Angelus Anthon was manhandled in Amloh district Ludhiana.
- October-November 1995, Daniel Masih was tortured by the police in a Church property dispute between Christians and Anti-Christian people at Phagwara district Ludhiana,
- Sr. Alnty was killed in Amloh district Ludhiana and
- Sr. Maria was manhandled in Amloh in the same district.

B. DURING THE AKALI–BJP GOVERNMENT FROM 1997 TO 2002

- An annual convention was not allowed to a worship meeting by Bajrang Dal and Vishwa Hindu Parishad at Nabha on June, 1998. Paster Bkju Varghese got the permission from S.D.M. Nabha District Patiala, fifteen days prior to the programe in June 1998. Just three hours before the meeting, S.H.O. of police Station forcibly cancelled the convention on the advice of Bajrang Dal and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and gave written cancellation order to the organization. The cancellation order smashed the sentiment of the Christian community.
- April 1, 1999 attack on the preacher and also snatched the Bible from him and also tortured. The police did not take any action despite a complaint. The Punjab Christian Moment Protested against the culprits.

115 See Masih Sansar from 1997 to 2002 for various incidents, Jalandhar.
- A few acres of land belonging to the Church forcibly taken over by the anti-Christians at Zeera (Ferozpur).
- The pamphlet of 17 pages printed by the All India Arya Representative Sabha in December 1998 and distributed at Pathankot and Gurdaspur.
- St. Peter and St. Paul Churches robbed on January 1, 2000 at Phillaur, Punjab.
- The Dainik Jagran and Bajrang Dal wrote a statement to destroy all Christians in Punjab on September 12, 2002.
- Masih Sammelan disturbed by the Shiv Sena in September 2000 at Muktsar.
- Fundamentalistic people murdered the leader Mustak Masih. Puranna Shalle in District Gurdaspur on September 20, 2000, because his dog entered the Mandir of the village and licked the oil from the Jot (pot).
- Attack on Christian family at Khairabad (Ropar) on Oct. 7, 2001 and copy of the Bible burnt also.
- Bajrang Dal stopped the Christian to build a church building of the Church at village Hajara-Singh-Wala of District Ferozepur on September 13, 2002.

IV. POLITICAL PROBLEMS

Economic backwardness and lower social background of the Punjabi Christians give them little or no scope in the political arena which is a highly caste ridden and dominate society in Punjab. Although Casteism in its primitive form is fast disappearing in urban and slowly in rural areas, but it is manifested now through other ways. Today, caste has become a political entity. Political leadership and active involvement in political process seem to be controlled by economically stronger communities but Punjab Christian are...
socio-economically backward. Hence, it is difficult for Christian community to make progress in Punjab politics. They are considered as negligible vote bank by the Political Parties. Basically, community lack ‘social pull’ which is essential in the political field. The Christians too, in most parts of the Punjab, suffer from the same disability.

The phenomenon involving a high caste and stronger community as prerequisite for progress in politics, is a feature not only of Punjab but of many other states in India. Excellent studies made by Rajni Kathari, M.N. Srinivas L.P. Vidhyarthi, and Moinshakir and several others have proved this fact. To illustrate this point, the example from the Assembly election can be taken. Christian candidate contested the election from the Dhariwal, District Gurdaspur (February 2002). Neither the Sikhs nor the Hindu votes favoured him. He failed miserably in this election.

The lack of cohesion is another important reason which has been responsible for hindering the Punjabi Christian community from better participation in political life in the Punjab. Firstly, since the Christian community is scattered over a wide area of the Punjab state, any coordinating work and comprehensive programme is quite difficult to come through. But there are many other kinds of problems for which the Christian community itself is mostly responsible, e.g. groupism within the local church, church politics, disparities between rich and poor Christians and disunity on the basis of denominational affinity such as evangelical is also found. The dominations are not helpful to make the standing in the politics because there is slight difference between the religious and lay leaders. Religious leaders want to build their own political standing.

Due to these problems, Punjabi Christian community has no proper organization or political party on the political leadership to bring political consciousness among the Christians. Thus, the community has failed to
produce any dynamic leader due to socio economic backwardness. Neither individual lay leader nor a religious leader of community took an initiative to organize the community to lead the Christians on the political path. Christians are unable to mobilize collectively for the redressal of their hurt feelings. Even Christian educational institutions and churches failed to give the right direction to young generation of the community for political purpose in Punjab.

Theoretically there are many Christian organizations in existence. Some of them are functioning at state level, while others claim to be at national and international levels. But it is a matter of great regret that no organization has its aims and objectives. These organizations have failed miserably to identify the problems of the community. But it does not mean that Christians have no awareness about their problems. They have the spirit to fight and protest against exploitations and atrocities. Actually the problem is, that not a single dynamic leader came forward to lead the community on the proper path. On the other side, some selfish and dishonest persons contest the elections for individual motives. They take money and withdraw the nominations in favour of candidates of other parties. They do not bother about the community problems. There are two major reasons for this:

(a) They have no finance. no community support and no manpower; and

(b) During the election time, landlords and the upper caste leaders become very polite to capture the power and force to the Christians withdraw their names.

In the nutshell, although existence of minority is a universal phenomenon in the world but the nature and minority problem is not always the same everywhere. This study is confined to religious minority i.e.
Christians of India and particulars Christian of the Punjab. Their problems, in general, are an integral part of the overall problems in this country. They have the experience of discrimination at two levels in India, firstly along with dalits in general and secondly on the basis of religion. Their past association with foreign rulers in continuing to haunt them and depriving them of equal rights. They have a feeling that there is violation of the constitutional rights by the State agencies. Even minority rights, conversion issue, and violation of their constitutional rights have become a powerful weapon for the fanatics and politicians. The communalization of politics and political exploitation of religion that keeps minorities out of the mainstream.