CHAPTER - 5

THE COMMUNITY IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS

The Christian community has played a significant role in the political process both during the colonial and post-colonial period. But the role played by it is not commensurate with the aspirations of the community and this can be noticed from the identity crisis that the community faces even today. Political participation is considered to be a part of a democratic political system. It generates patriotism, loyalty and a sense of commitment to the society at large. It is the essential for the smooth and efficient functioning of the democracy.

Political participation is the involvement of all the people at various levels of political environment. It is the citizens' participation in political decisions including choice of rulers as well as participation in political processes and activity. The participation of a small section of population in democracy results in the formulation of a dictatorial government, which always remains biased towards the rights of the minorities, who have no footage in politics. If a government is elected by widespread participation of all sections of society, then its foremost duty to keep the interests of entire population are safe.

Sydney Verba has pointed out that political participation refers to acts by those not formerly empowered to make decisions - the acts being intended to influence the behaviour of those, who have such decision making power. In a democratic society, an individual who can not participate in politics, because of his social position is in fact deprived of his fundamental rights. As Sydney Verba puts it, "In a society, where participation is a value, inability to participate represents a severe deprivation." Norman

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2. Ibid. p. 57.

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D. Palmer also states that since some degree of political participation is essential in a democratic system, the periodic elections occupy a central place in it. Indeed, elections provide one of the most effective means of political participation, although by no means the only one. Such participation, presumably strengthens the democratic system, although, it may be much more limited in fact than it appears to be. Under certain circumstances, a high degree of participation may impose serious strains on the system.3

Myron Weiner also defines political participation as any voluntary action, successful or unsuccessful, organised or unorganised, legitimate or episodic on continuous, employing legitimate or illegitimate methods intended to influence the choice of public policies, the administration of public affairs, or the choice of political leaders at any levels of government, local or national.4

While examining the different viewpoints, one finds that political participation is not just the act of voting. It is concerned with the way, people take part in the political process. It includes other political activities also, such as, taking interest in election politics, attending election and election meeting, becoming member of a political party or other association, intention to vote, expressing one’s views and raising one’s voice on issues of public importance etc.

The purpose of this chapter is to find out the level of active involvement of the Christian community i.e. minority community in the political sphere of the country. Some groups of Christians have regarded the idea of political participation with disfavour terming it as against their spiritual and doctrinal grounds. They interpret the Gospel in purely spiritual, other-worldly or individualistic terms and forget that it is the message of Christ’s Salvation to the whole of life, including politics.

The Gospel of Christ cannot by intention be non-political. It is the proclamation

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of the kingship of Jesus Christ over all areas of the life of mankind, a kingship which today is seen and declared by faith, but will be openly manifested at the end of the times. Therefore, according to Thomas and Devanandan, "Christian participation in politics is not only an obligation laid on us by the nation; it is also part of our obligation to our Lord Himself. He has ordained our earthly citizenship so that in exercising its responsibilities we may express our loyalty to His Law and witness to His love."\(^5\)

Christians have a real concern for a political order which guarantees religious freedom – the freedom of evangelism and of conversion. And since the state has the power and responsibility of social change, Christians need to be involved in politics, in order to fulfill its responsibilities for the emancipation and progress of all sections of people suffering from social disabilities. Indeed, Christians themselves are sufferers of social and economic backwardness in several parts of the country. They need and demand socio-economic security, freedom and justice, not exclusively for themselves, but for other sections of the national community which are similarly exploited. Thus Christians’ participation in the political life of the state is their moral duty, a national obligation and the demand of enlightened self-interest. Christians feel that every one must obey the state authorities, because no authority exists without God and whoever opposes the existing authority opposes what God has ordered and any one who does so be using the judgement on himself.\(^6\)

Christianity is politically sensitive and proactive. It is enough in this context to point out that Jesus denounced the attempt to drive a wedge between religion and loyalty to one’s Government “We are to render into Caesar what is Caesar’s and unto God, what is God’s.”\(^7\) The authority vested in the ruler comes from God, and we are to respect it. More importantly, we are to love our neighbours as ourselves. A Christian is required to be in a state of identification with the given context. It is spiritually


impossible to live as an alien in one’s own country. The ideas of the nation and forms of
government are all God ordained. This being the case both in theory and practice. Thus
it is incredible that insinuations of disaffection are made against the Christian
community.8 This study’s main concern is with Christian’s participation and political
activities, before and after independence, Christians involved in various political
activities. Their participation cannot be under estimated.

I

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AND INDIAN FREEDOM STRUGGLE

Indian National Movement was a struggle in which its national spirit and the
aspirations of the people were extensively manifested. The extent of the participation
in this movement carried great bearing in the post independence days on every
community of the country, especially on minority communities. In this factual study,
special attention was given to trace the attitude of Indian Christians towards the
National Freedom Struggle. The role of the Christianity in nation building movement
and development may be summed up in two lines of the Bible where Jesus Christ had
said, “you are the salt of the earth”. At another place Jesus Christ said, “you are the
light of the world.” Christians did exactly that. Indian Christians have made a
contribution in nation building, both during and after the Independence.

Christians have played a very significant role in the Indian national freedom
movement. A.O. Hume, a Christian leader who was the first founder member of the
Indian National Congress, organised the Indian people and devoted his life for the cause
of India’s Independence. His solicitude for the well being of Indians has never been
doubted. A number of well-educated moderate Indian Christians, like Kalicharan
Banerjee of Bengal, Madhu Sudan Dass of Orissa, C.G. Nath of Lahore and Paul Pillai
of Madras actively participated in Congress session of 1885. During this session, A.O.
Hume, proposed the name of an educated Christian named W.C. Banerjee and it was
seconded by K.T. Telang and S. Subramania Iyer for the post of president. During the

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p. 23.
1888 Congress session at Bombay, a number of Christian women like Pandita Ramba, Trimback and Nikamba were conspicuous by their presence. They urged Indian Christians to take interest in the politics and participate in the Congress session.

There is no doubt that during the colonial period the Indian Christians played an important role in the Indian National Congress. The first among them, Raja Harnam Singh was a member of the Panjab Legislature Council. Kali Charan Chaterjee served in the Hoshiarpur Municipal Council from 1874-1890. His son Golak Nath Chatterjee was a member of the Indian Christian Association of Lahore and attended the 1886 and 1888's session of the Indian National Congress, Charles Golak Nath of Jalandhar, and son in law of K.C. Chaterjee attended the 1886 and 1888 sessions of the Indian National Congress, and was a member of its Steering Committees in 1883, 1888 and 1900. Two important associations, termed as pro-Congress, were the Christian Students Association of Forman College and the Indian Christian Association of Lahore and Allahabad.9

Another achievement was that the Christian impact was also felt in the field of publication. A well known Indian Christian, Upadhayaya Brahmabandev from Bengal, founded a daily paper "Sandhya" which turned revolutionary and fanned the agitation against the partition of Bengal and gave nationalism a mass appeal. Likewise, Yusuf Meharally was a founder member and general secretary of the Congress Socialist Party. He actively participated in the Non-Cooperation Movement with Mahatma Gandhi. Frequently, he criticised the cruel British imperial policy. He exhorted the people to participate in the freedom movement, and it was he who led the famous anti-Simon Commission campaign in Bombay.

Another well known Indian Christian leader, named Joseph Baptista, was among the first to openly challenge the repressive measure of the British imperial policy. Baptista played a remarkable role in "Home Rule Movement" with Lokmanya Tilak. In 1894, as a young engineering graduate in the Forest Department of Bombay Presidency, he had to suffer the ignominy of relinquishing his post for bringing to light the

9 Godwin Shiri *op. cit.*, pp. 32-33, and also see Doraisawamy, Solomon *op. cit.*., p. 139.
malpractice of a British colleague. In 1910 Baptista suggested the idea of “Home Rule” to Tilak but it was shelved temporarily. As the right hand man of Tilak, to whom he had proposed the concept of Responsive Cooperation, Baptista presided over the Provincial Conference at Poona and first publicly mooted the suggestion that while Great Britain was involved in the war, India would demand Home Rule and assist in bringing the conflict to a successful end.\textsuperscript{10}

When Home Rule was launched in 1916, Baptista was actively involved in the formation of the scheme.\textsuperscript{11} Then he was deputed to England, he succeeded in getting Home Rule adopted as a plank by the British Labour Party and, prophetically declared that “Independence of India would be obtained by the Labour Party of England”. However, with the untimely death of Tilak and his own disillusionment with the Congress in 1920, Baptista withdraw from active politics. But he kept promoting nationalism, specially to his own community through the local press. Just before his death in 1930, in the face of British atrocities to curb the non-cooperation movement, the veteran nationalist was even willing to court arrest. In the Congress movement as shaped by Gandhiji after 1921, Catholics, as a body was kept out. However, a few scattered individuals like Gilani of Allahabad, J. Alva, Peter Alvarcs, C.J. Varkey of Malabar, Tuticorin, Jerome A. and Saldhana of Mangalore played very significant roles.\textsuperscript{12}

It will be worthwhile to bring to record the names of some of the greatest leading national leaders like Golak Nath and Kalicharan etc. Golak Nath’s eldest daughter Jane, was married to Babu Briji Nath. He was the Superintendent of the Session Courts at Jalandhar. His two sons were leading officials a Deputy Commissioner and the other a Barrister. Mary Golak Nath was married to the Rev. Kali Charan Chatterjee and became a Professor of Mathematics at Government College,


\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 160-161.

\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 161.
Lahore. Pauline Golak Nath married Kanwer (Sir) Harnam Singh who became a member of the Punjab Imperial Legislative Council. All their children attained eminence in the political as well as in National fields like Dalip Singh, Maharaj Singh who was the governor of Bombay from 1948-1952 and Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur, who became the Minister of Health in the first government of Independent India under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru.

At a conference of Indian Christians at Bombay, the ‘Indian Christians Association of Bengal’ pledged its support to the Civil Disobedience Movement led by Gandhiji and his call for the famous Dandi March to attain full freedom for India. A leading national journal *The Indian Social Reformer* carried the contents of the resolutions, passed at the above conference. It declared that the members of the Indian Christian Community were solidarity behind the Civil Disobedience Movement, along with the other communities, in their endeavour to win complete freedom for India at the earliest possible movement.

L.B. Swami Kannu Pillai participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement and Satyagraha. He was founder of Catholic Indian Association (CIA), launched to save the interest of Christian community. In response to its pleas, several Christians were opted into Madras Legislature Council after 1919, K.T. Paul and S.K. Dutta was the first Christian who was a member of the Senate of Panjab University from 1908 to 1914 made significant contribution to the nationalist movement and urged the Christians to throw in their lot with the other communities in the Satyagraha to attain complete freedom for India.14

Henry Devadas was a student leader in Mysore during the *Quit India Movement* in 1942. When he was in the final year of Bachelor or Arts degree course. He was convicted for sedition and was imprisoned in the Mysore city jail for six months. In

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13 Dutta, S.K. was the first Christian who became a member of the Senate of Panjab University from 1908 to 1914.

recognition of this, the government of India awarded him the *Tamra Patra* and also sanctioned him a pension for life.

The role of Christian community and individuals during the colonial rule was acknowledged. The grateful national leaders of India never forgot to acknowledge and appreciate what the Indian Christians had done for the freedom of the motherland. Observing the solidarity and active participation of the Christians and their associations in the "Quit India Movement", C Rajagopalachari remarked in 1944, "Does not the Nationalist parties in India know, that the Indian Christian community has distinguished itself by giving its fullest support to the nationalist movement and by never supporting any anti-nationalist move"?

Another great leader, Professor N.C. Mookherjee of Allahabad Christian College said that, the Indian Christian was called anti-national because they would not give up Christianity in the mask of nationalism. The Indian Christian leaders had no choice in the matter of their faith against nationalism. The Christianity was deep rooted in them to make them true Nationalists. The basic tenet of a Christian was spirituality and, that Evangelism was their first duty. It was felt by the highly educated Indian Christian leaders that the Hindus rejected them as anti-Indian because they would not keep their religion aside and come to help them. Solomon Doraiswamy further added that Christianity itself was not inherently anti-nationalist. This is quite clear from the writings of Gopinath Naidu, Kali Charan Chatterjee, S.K. Datta and N.C. Mookherjee. The Indian Christian movement was politicised by the nationalistic movement.  

As years rolled by, the tempo of the national consciousness in Christians also increased. For example, Rev. (Dr.) Miller, a prominent missionary supported the Swadeshi Movement and said that its beneficial effects should be felt on the economic

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15 Doraisawmy, Solomon, *op. cit.*, pp. 140-141. The incorporation of the spirit of national independence led to a theology of Indian renaissance. Referring to people like S.K. Rudra (1861-1925), Datta, S.K. (1878-1948), Paul, K.T. (1876-1931), and Azariah (1874-1945), Thomas Comments, they were Christians responding positively to the national renaissance, in their lay and spiritual vocations, for avowedly Christians reasons see Clarke Sathianatha, *op.cit.*, p. 39.

and social conditions of Indians. The Eurasian authorities of Christian College, Madras went to the extent of naming the native Christian Association as Madras Indian Christian Association (MICA), reflecting their Swadeshi spirit, during the celebration of Annual function celebrations in 1908.16

The role of Christian women in India’s freedom struggle is equally remarkable. Thousands of them participated in the freedom struggle whole heartedly. Many foreign Christian women like Anni Besant, Margaret Elizabeth and Madam Cama figure prominently for having contributed a lot to the struggle and for upliftment of the Indian Society. Many of them were greatly influenced by Mahatama Gandhi’s ideal of “Ahinsa” in the freedom struggle. They happily underwent all types of suffering and repressions let out by the Britishers on the freedom fighters.

Although Hindu, Muslim and Sikh women made a lot of contribution in freedom struggle, Christian women like Raj Kumari-Amrit Kaur, Violet Alva and Annie Mascrene also did not lag behind, Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur, a well known Christian lady, belonged to the princely state of Kapurthala in Punjab she was inspired by Gandhiji’s ideals. Her father had embraced Christianity, Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur inherited her religious faith from him and joined Congress. She was initiated into the national politics by a liberal Congress leader, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, who was a good friend of her father.

As time passed, Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur became one of Gandhiji’s close associates. She served him as his Secretary for sixteen years. During the Salt Campaign, she was arrested in Bombay for violating the Salt Law. When the ‘Communal Award;’ was announced, she outrightly condemned it. When she went to the North-West Frontier Province to advocate the cause of freedom struggle, she was arrested and convicted on a charge of sedition.17 During the Quit India Movement, she organised many processions. One such procession led by her was lathi charged at Shimla, and she

was arrested at Kalka in Punjab.

One more prominent Christian lady, Anne Mascrenc belonged to a Christian family of Malabar. During the Freedom Movement, she was also persecuted in many ways. She was arrested and imprisoned on many occasions. Violet Alva, a well known Christian woman also took part in the Freedom Movement and during the Quit India Movement she was jailed and had to carry her five month-old baby to the prison with her.18

The national spirit in the minds of people arose when Gandhiji launched various movements as part of freedom struggle. All the communities organised themselves for the national struggle. The Indian Christians of Bombay gathered together on a common platform to form the Nationalist Christian Party. In its first resolution the community emphatically demanded, for India, the right of self determination. It was of the opinion that only a Self-Government will satisfy the Indians. Many Christian leaders including Tarabai Tilak spoke on the occasion. A well know organisation named “Christian Seva Sangh” supported the “Nationalist Christian Party, (NCP)”. The NCP openly defied the government and courted arrest during various movements. Joachim Alva was arrested on Jatin Day and served his first sentence. Several Christians, such as Jos Bennie, F.M. Pinto and many others were also imprisoned.19

The efforts of Christian community in liberation of Goa were also considerable. The writings of Menezes Braganza from Goa awakened the Goans to need of National consciousness in British India. In 1928, Tristao Braganza, Cunha known as the father of Goan-freedom movement, started a branch of the Congress committee in Goa.20

The first national organisation to be recognised by the Indian National Congress (INC) Committee. It confined its field of activity to agitate for freedom, enlightening the people to agitate for freedom and enlightening them about the economics of the

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Portuguese rule in India. The Quit India Movement in 1942 gave much needed stimulus to the Goan youth. Peter Alvares, a Goan social and political worker in Bombay had actively participated in the Quit India Movement.21

After the end of World War II, some of the Christian Goan youth of Goa founded an organisation called "Goan Youth League" (GYL). It started its propaganda22 against Portuguese repression and organised several marches and meetings in Bombay. They got exasperated by the Government policies but did not drift away from the Government completely and rather became leftists in the freedom movement. Their role was that of moderates in the freedom struggle, reciprocating the fraternal sentiments of their community and helping them to develop. Thus, by developing communal harmony and amity they played an invaluable role in the eventual transformation of India as a full-fledged nation.

From time to time, Indian Christian Community played a vital role for the Indian freedom struggle. They had no hesitation in trusting the leaders of freedom struggle who respected the Christian faith and sentiments. Gandhiji once said “Sermon on the Mount” and ‘The Gita’ are essentially the same. The political participation of the Christians was given vitality and vision from time to time. It never lost direction even when things began to be seen and read in communal colour.

There are some activities which are really the foundation stone of a nation, helping it in its progress, growth and development. Christians helped in determining the real worth of the nation. It is unfortunate that despite the efforts and bonding they are despised even though they helped the nation to go forward, to create a clean, healthy and disciplined society. Preaching of hatred, bringing about enmity and discord

21 Rochelle Pinto argues that pamphlets in 19th Century colonial Goa did not actually reproduce the norms established in European point. Instead the contents of pamphlets were altered according to class differences, caste hierarchies and the context in which rural and urban politics functioned in Goa. ‘A time to Publish : Pamphlets and Politics in Colonial Goa’ Economic and Political Weekly. 26th February 2005, pp. 877-88.

22 For the pamphlets and alteration made in them in the content of class differences in Goa see Pinto, Rochelle (2005) “A Time to Publish Pamphlets and Politics in Goa” Economic and Political Weekly, February 26.
amongst the people and fermenting riots, commotion and chaos in a country cannot help build a nation.\textsuperscript{23}

Although the Indian Christians participated in the freedom struggle, made many sacrifices and suffered along with other communities, their sacrifices were not nationally recognized. Christian’s participation in the National struggle had both negative and positive aspects. According to Bhatty, E.C. “The Indian people are under one imperialistic control, the Indian Christians are under two, namely British imperialism and missionary imperialism”.\textsuperscript{24} In trying to liberate themselves from missionary imperialism, Indian Christians had to overcome the colonial nature of their entanglement with European missions. Several Indian Christian leaders recognised the alien character of the Christianity inducted into India by European missionaries. P. Chenchiah expressed the opinion\textsuperscript{25} that “the origin and growth of Protestant Mission in India has a certain resemblance to the history of East India Company. The mission was a member of the home Church sent abroad to do his work. The early converts who settled in the mission compound were overseas members of the denomination. They were ruled by home boards, financed from the church funds. The converts got into Christian their religion directly foreign missions.

The first step in this direction was to reclaim Christian values from the west. Indian nationalists facilitated this task. Thus Rammohan Roy restated the fact that Jesus was an Asiatic. Keshub Chandra Sen developed the concept of an "Oriental Christ" Indian Christian involved in the national movement invariably accepted these

\textsuperscript{23} Esteves, Satro, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 35.


formulations. The second inevitable step in developing authentic Indian Christianity was to establish a sense of pride in Indian Christians about the traditions and culture of India. Perhaps the most intense advocacy for this came from K.T. Paul a well known Christian. He wrote:

"Of all the ancient cultures of the world the one which has maintained its progress continuously for thirty centuries, is that of India.....The Christian nationalist, then is proud of his patriotism. He studies many nations at close quarters, notes many admirable features in their life and thought, but when all is summed up, he remains proud, and profoundly thankful that he was born in India and is essentially an important part of its invaluable culture".

After reviewing the attitude of Indian national leaders to Indian Christians and Christianity, George Thomas correctly writes: "Thus a significant line of Indian nationality experienced a conversion into the humanizing Christian view of life. They consciously and openly acknowledged the significance of the west and Christianity for the regeneration of India. But at the same time the association of Christianity with the West and the ethnographical view of culture, religion and modernity presented by the vast majority of the colonial officials and missionaries came into violent conflict with the cultural identity and the self assertion of the Indian nationalists. To a certain extent they over came this ambiguity by separating Christian ethics from Western Christianity and formulating the concept of Oriental Christ. This process also vastly contributed towards seeing Christ and Christianity as capable of finding new expressions among other cultures and people and transforming their cultural, religious and social structures without disintegrating their own cultural identity."

27 Ibid., pp. 48-49.
28 See Job op.cit., pp. 48-49 and also see George Thomas, Christians in Indian and Indian Nationalism, (1885-1950) : An Interpretation in Historical and Theological perspective; Laugh, Verlag Peter D. (Frankfurt Main), 1979. p. 54.
Punjab Christians and the Freedom Movement

The participation of the Christian community in the Freedom Movement of India at the national level and particularly in Punjab is not in large numbers. Very few Christians played important role for freedom struggle. The reason for non-participation of Christians in the freedom struggle, was economic dependence on Mission establishments. A major part of the community was economically dependent on the Missions. The community leaders, who were religious and foreign missionaries, belonged to either British, American or Dutch nationalities. For obvious reasons, they did not encourage anyone, belonging to their religious to participation in the freedom struggle. Under these peculiar circumstances the participate of Christians in the national struggle could hardly be expected. In Punjab, the Christian community, largely from the landless class was branded as anti-national humiliated. They bore the brunt of higher classes and were subjected to physical torture. Further, when the mission authorities got the government to form a Punjabi Christian Regiment, which at the Armistics of 1918 consisted of 2600 recruits, the community was further alienated from Hindu and Sikh society and displayed little enthusiasm for any nationalist activity.29

Although the horrors of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre rekindled the flame of nationalism, the Christians found themselves caught in the frenzy of violent reprisals against the missionaries. They came face to face with a political situation in which the forces of communalism became stronger than those of nationalism. John C.B. Webster wrote.30 Things began to worsen for the Christians, especially in Amritsar, where after the Police had fired upon a crowd which had gathered to protest the deportation of Dr. S. Satyapal and Kitchlew, the atmosphere resembled that of 1857. The religious book depot and the Church in Hall Bazaar were burned, a girl’s school and a missionary lady were attacked. These developments made Christians fear for their lives. Outside

30 Webster, John C.B. See in Puri, Hanish K. op.cit., p. 127
Amritsar, a missionary house in Wazirabad, a Church in Gujranwala and a mission school in Gujarat were also damaged.” He further expressed that several Christians were divided in their loyalties. Some Christians believed that the violence was basically anti-Christian in nature while others including both missionaries and the All India Conferences of Indian Christians condemned the martial law regime following the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre.31

The non-cooperation movement evoked more sympathy from the educated Punjabi Christians. But they were too moderate in ideology to accept the recommended methods of non-cooperation. E.L. Ralia Ram, Sikh neighbors in Punjab, and All India conference of India’s Christians held a meeting in Lahore, in late December 1921, with a majority community Punjabi delegates. It adopted a mediating position between the government and the non-cooperators. During the non-cooperation movement, E.L. Ralia Ram from Lahore (Punjab), the dynamic Christian leader, defined the role of the Christian community as peacemakers A decade later, Punjabis, in general did not respond to the Civil Disobedience Movement, as they had to the Non-Cooperation and Khilafat movements. Christian participation in it, was negligible. However, there were clear indications that Christians were more sympathetic to the freedom movements than a decade earlier and increasingly alienated from a government, which either took them for granted or did not take them seriously.

The studies available on the subject of the Indian freedom struggle mention individual names of the Indian Christian personalities here and there. But they have failed to pinpoint a critical and progressive role of the Indian Christian community as such in the freedom struggle. In the post-independence era, the Christian community has been thought of as a caricature community in the Indian social set up and branded as illegitimate converts from the Hindu community. This opinion, some-how, got reinforced by the departure of a large number of Anglo-Indian Christians, in the years immediately following the independence of India, to Britain.

31 Ibid., p. 127.
Even the Indian social milieu, instead of helping Christians to establish an identity of their own, castigates them – thus perpetuating an identity crisis. Christians’ independent identity as a community is resisted and a number of researchers into the role of the other Indian communities (viz. Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs) provide enough clues in this regard. The signals, emanating from such writings, indirectly question the presence of the very concept of patriotism in the Christian community vis-à-vis India and her freedom struggle.

III

Indian Christians and their participation in the Politics (1899 – 1947)

In the communal framework, Indian Christians participated in the politics. In 1899, Christians in the Madras presidency, where a vast majority of Dalit Christians lived were granted separate identity in the general constituency (elsewhere in India all Christian were part of the General constituency until 1935). There is not much evidence of Christian political activity during this period. In 1929, a deputation of Christians gave evidence before the Simon Commission in Madras, arguing that they should be considered a part of the general constituency whereby they expected a better treatment than they had received in the constituency as a distinct Christian identity. Special representation provision for religious minorities in the legislatures were first introduced by the colonial state in the constitutional reforms of 1909. It granted separate electorates to Muslims. The Government of India Acts of 1919 and 1935 extended these provisions to the Sikhs and the Indian Christians. Reservation in government appointments for Muslims were first recognised by the colonial state in 1925. A policy was formed and was extended to other communities under the Government of India Act of 1935. The system of communal quotas in public appointment in India was instituted by the princely state of Mysore.

The Constituent Assembly was set up according to the Cabinet Mission Plan. The Cabinet Mission’s statement of May 16, 1946 fixed the total number of members of the Constituent Assembly at 385. Of this, 292 were to be elected by the provincial
legislative Assemblies, four to represent the Chief Commissioner’s provinces, and 93 to be elected to represent the Indian state. The main purpose of Cabinet Plan was to ensure that the representative allotted to each community in a province, shall be elected by the members of the community in the Legislative Assembly. Special efforts had been made to give full representation to the interest of minorities.

In the election to the Provincial Legislative Assemblies, held in 1946, the representation of various sections of society and communities were: Indian Christians 20, Anglo-Indian-11, Sikhs –34 and Muslims-482. 657 seats were kept for general category. Special representation to women were also given. The representation of the various minority communities in the assembly after partition was as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Community wise representation of women</th>
<th>Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Nepalis</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sikhs</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Parsis</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Anglo Indian</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Backward Tribes</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Scheduled Castes</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the provincial legislative Assemblies, 80 (representatives) elected on the basis

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270
of communal electorate were converted into electoral college for electing members to
the Constituent Assembly held in July 1946. Almost all the political parties took part.
Congress party gave representations to all shades and opinion, and to all minority
groups in the Constituent Assembly.

In 1928, the Nehru report recommended an adequate representation to all
minorities. The most important safeguard given to all minorities in a democracy, is
dependant on the scheme of representation. The Sapru committee which was set up by
the all party conference in November 1944 represented a major attempt to examine the
minority question. It suggested a 10 per cent reservation to Muslims, Sikhs, Christians,
Anglo-Indians and Scheduled Castes. It also recommended full religious tolerance, non-
interference in religious beliefs and practices and institutions to protect the language
and cultures of all communities. It also recommended political representation, but these
recommendations created so much controversy regarding the representation of
minorities that the report could not be adopted. The problem of minorities was one
of the most important and controversial issue before the pioneers of the Constitution of
India. The representatives of the minority communities in the Constituent Assemblies
participated actively and fearlessly in its debates. Many Indian Christians actively
participated in various committees to safeguard the interest of the community.

For safeguarding the interest of the minority communities, a sub-committee on
minorities was formed by the Assembly headed by H.C. Mookerjee which submitted its
report on July 27, 1947. It recommended that seats should be reserved for religious
minorities under joint electorates. Secondly, the interests of such minorities should be
protected in the constitution. Amenities and preferences for minorities should be
provided for in the public services, but preferences should be granted depending on
one’s of merit and efficiency. Under the 1935 constitution, Christians were granted two
seats in the Punjab Legislative Assembly. One of their MLAs, S.P. Singha, attained
unusual prominence and was elected as Speaker of legislature assembly in 1946 and
presided over the vote to partition Punjab. His achievement was, however, considered
neutral in the raging communal upheaval. The Christian community was ignored
politically by the contending parties and Christians were not even invited to attend the Punjab minorities commission in Delhi on May 1, 1947. They were, thus, only the victim of political decisions and will of communal parties. During the partition riots of 1947, some Christians became innocent victims of rioters for giving aid and shelter to Hindu, Muslim or Sikh neighbours. They were also considered the most effective public workers because they were trusted for their impartiality.35

The composition of the Constituent Assembly, suggested under the plan, was for undivided India. 296 members were to be elected from the provinces and 93 from the Indian states. The 296 seats were divided among the representatives of British India provinces of various communities and six members of the Indian Christians.

H.C. Mookerjee, one of the prominent Indian Christians pioneered the idea that reservation of seats would perpetuate violation of the rights of Christian community and advised that by mingling with others in political arena they would attain a feeling of equality. Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur had felt that reservation of seats, like privileges for any community would go against the declared objective of the Indian Union and would lead to its break-up.36

During the Salt Satyagraha, when the question of electorate rights of minorities surfaced, Christian leaders in Bombay namely Joseph Baptista and Alloysius Soares spurned offers from other minority leaders to jointly demand separate electorates37 With the determined efforts of all the Christian leaders, they got nomination of the Indian Christians to the first Round Table Conference. At that time, the community was in favour of communal electorate. Indian Christians were also invited to the All-Christian Conference at Poona. But in the third Round Table Conference, no Christian was included in the twenty three men committee. At that time, a joint committee of Catholics and other Christians was formed and its representatives projected the

35 Webster, John C.B. See in Puri, Harish K. op.cit., p. 128.
36 Teresa, Albuquerque, Engineer, Asghar Ali op.cit., p. 166.
37 Ibid., p. 166.

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community stand on joint electorate to the Cabinet Mission.

At that time, there was a great appreciation for the bold stand taken by Indian Christian leaders such as K.T. Paul and S.K. Datta at the Round Table Conference held in London in the early thirties renouncing separate electorates and accepting joint electorates with Hindu majority community. But the Muslims, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes were not prepared to accept it.  

Although the demand of granting Fundamental Rights had previously been ignored, the Constituent Assembly set up an advisory committee on minorities and Fundamental Rights in 1947. The Christians were well represented in it. A. Dharam Das, (U.P.), A. Wilson and Rev. Jerome D’souza (Madras), J. Alban de Souza Anthony (Bombay), B. Kakra (Bihar), N.C. Mukherji and Frank Anthony (Bengal), Rev. J.M. Nicholas (Assam), Raj Kumari Kaul (C.P. & Berar) and later Ruthnaswamy. And as K.M. Munshi was appointed the legal pilot of the advisory committee and he declared, the Christians took a fair attitude from the beginning. The were prepared to accept reservation proportionate to their population in the central legislature and legislative. In other words they wanted liberty to seek election from the general constituencies. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was made, Chairman of the Advisory Committee he stated in the favour of minorities.

"The minorities have made many sacrifices. I have consulted the working committee on the issue. The working committee is of the opinion that these Fundamental Rights must be granted to the minorities since they stand drafted in the draft constitution of India."

The proposal was accepted unanimously. The Indian Christians responded to the goodwill of the majority and surrendered the reservation of seats accorded to them. The position was clear that, the minorities did not have the right to political reservation H.C.

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38 Banerjee, Brajendra Nath “Religious Conversions in India,” op.cit., p. 129.
39 Teresa , Albuquerque see in Engineer, Asghar Ali op.cit., p. 167.
40 ibid., p. 167.
Mookerjee explained the entire idea behind the surrender of reserved seats on May 11, 1948. Rhetorically, he asked two question to the constituent Assembly:

“The first is, are we really honest when we say that we are seeking to establish a secular state? And the second is whether we intend to have one nation. If our idea is to have a secular state, it is inevitable that we cannot afford to recognise minorities based upon religion”. Similarly, a Harijan leader V.I. Muniswami Pillai also remarked in the Assembly. “I feel today is a red letter day for the welfare of the minority communities that inhabit this great land.” He felt satisfaction on the report produced by the Advisory Committee.

The Draft Constitution of India as decided by the Drafting committee, headed by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, was submitted to the President of the Constituent Assembly on Feb. 21, 1948. The problem of the minorities attracted considerable attention of the Drafting Committee and Article 292 to 294 of the Draft constitution provide reservation of seats for minorities in House of People and the legislative Assemblies of the states. Article 296 of Draft constitution provides details of rights of minority communities to employments under the state. In succeeding Article says that all claims, for such employment, of all the minority communities shall be taken into consideration. Such consideration shall ensure that a high level of efficiency of administration is maintained in all affairs of the state.

In the words of Joseph Alban D'Souza, a Christian representative in the Assembly, “It is a monumental piece of work, put up by the honourable Dr. Ambedkar

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41 See “Constituent Assembly Debates” (January 1947) Vol. 8, p. 298. and also See also Indian Currents: A Voice for the Voiceless Vol. XIII, Issue 34, August, 26, 2001, New Delhi, p. 23, Shefali Jha argues that the granting of a range of individual and collective fights to the minorities who used, in the Constituent Assembly to justify the refused of their demand for more adequate mechanisms of representation, for instance, for proportional representation or for reserved seats in the legislatures. ‘Rights versus Representation, Defending Minority Interests in the Constituent Assembly’ Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 16, 19 April, 2003, p. 1579.


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and his Drafting Committee after months of laborious work, which may definitely qualify as a work of experts a work which is comparative, selective and efficient in character right from the beginning to the end.”

After 1947, the partition of the country changed the position and situation of minority problems. The then Advisory Committee on minorities and Fundamental Rights recommended discontinuation of reservation for religious minorities. Most of the minority communities had themselves realised that the reservation for the minorities should be dropped. H.C. Mookerjee moved a resolution in the Constituent Assembly on May 11, 1949 for dropping of the clause on communal reservation of minority seats in the Legislature on basis of population. Muni Swamy Pillai moved an amendment in favour of continuing the reservation benefits to Scheduled Castes for a period of 10 years. So the advisory committee passed the resolution with one dissenting voice, in the following form: "The system of reservation for minorities, other than scheduled castes, in Legislatures be abolished."44

Dr. H.C. Mookerjee, Fr Jerome D'Souza John Mathai. Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur, P.T. Chacko were some of the prominent Christian leaders who represented the Christians in the Constituent Assembly. Although a minority, the Christian leaders, from the beginning, showed their nationalist leanings and political accuman which had great implication for unity and integrity of India. They resisted all attempts to provide reservation of the seats based on religious affiliation, especially proposed in the Interim Report of the Minority Advisory community of the constituent Assembly in 1947.

Later Sardar Patel remarked in the constituent Assembly.” Well, a group of people of highly nationalistic tendencies led by Dr. Mookerjee, Vice Chairman of this House, from the beginning opposed such reservation in the constitution. Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur also, at that time, opposed these reservations”. It was the Christian community which put complete trust in the people of other faiths and declined to press for a separate electorate. The Christians community in India has maintained the gap

43 Ibid., p. 64
44 Wadhwa, K.K. op.cit., p. 66.
between religion and politics as is evident from the comments of the Christian Institute of Bangalore. In a country like India, where negative communal forces are very powerful, the launching of a Christian political party can result in the further strengthening of reaction any forces and tendencies.

IV

Role of Christians in Non-Political Field

The Christians are deeply rooted in India for over 2004 years and have served the socio-economic, historio-cultural, educational, philantheropic and development causes of the Nation. India’s first Olympic Gold was won in Amsterdam in 1928 where 8 out of 11 players were Christians. India’s first and Second World Billiards Champions are Wilson Jones and Michael Ferreira, while Vijay Amritraj -Anand Amritraj and Leander Paes have won highest world rankings in Lawn Tennis at Wimbledon and elsewhere. The first pilot to land in troubled Kashmir while carrying urgently needed food and soldiers was Desmond Hayde, India’s first Ashok Chakra for Bravery went to Airhostess Gloria Berry. Long Jumper Anju Bobby George from Kerala who won the first ever medal for India in the Athletic’s world championship.

Compassion and care are oozuing in words and services of Christians and Noble Laureate Mother Teressa is one such shining example leading over 21000 health centres, hospitals, dispensaries, Sanatoriums, old age homes, drug rehabilitation centers and AIDS and leprosy care centres.

Education and health have been universally recognised as vital factors in the development of human personality. T.R. Pinhero said that “The Christian contribution to Indian education cannot be underestimated. The Christian School set up traditions


\[47\] Ibid
which influenced its students to be better human beings.\textsuperscript{48} In India, there are many Christian educational institutions like technical schools, Teachers Training Schools, Higher Secondary Schools, Hospitals, Dispensaries leprosy clinic, orphanages, Industrial centres and special institutions for the blind and the handicapped, where thousands of dedicated Indian nuns and medical missionaries work together in national spirit. The church has, in the past, been the pioneer in the education and care of the physically and mentally handicapped. The Church continues to render this service, since this class of handicapped persons may be the last to be adequately provided for by the state or other organisations.

Several socio-economic welfare organisations of Christians are working in India. All of them have worked for many years for the underprivileged, demonstrating their involvement with the welfare of mankind. They have taken up several urban and rural welfare projects like health care, irrigation, rehabilitation, relief to the earthquake stricken and flood relief including construction of dams.

However, the service they render to the nation outweigh their numerical proportion. Besides the various other Christian factions have taken up social service initiatives. The Catholic Church in India itself serves the nation with 111 Leprous, 455 Homes for the Aged, destitutes and handicapped, 102 Rehabilitation Centres, 704 Hospitals, 1085 Orphanages, 1514 Technical training schools, 268 Colleges 3725 Secondary Schools 8315, preparatory and primary schools 1875 dispensaries, 813 health centers, and innumerable other facilities for underprivileged. All these institutions are meant for everyone in the country irrespective of their religious affiliation.\textsuperscript{49} Thousand other educational and Health institutions of Catholic, Salvation Army, Seventh day Adventist church, Anglical church and other Christian organizations Church are also serving the humanity with national spirit in India.

During the last 57 years the Christian community has produced four Chiefs of


Staff (two Navy and one each army and Air force); nearly 32 Lieutenant Generals, Vice Admirals and Air Marshals; over 40 Major Generals, Rear Admirals, Air Vice Marshals, over 150 Brigadiers Commanders and Air Commodores to the Indian defence services. In the 1971 war against Pak, four Christian Major Generals were involved in operations and all of them were recipients of Param Vishist Seva Medals.\(^{50}\)

In the cultural field, Christianity was a pioneer in producing Lexicography and dialects of most of the Indian languages, which facilitated the translation and opening up of the great spiritual wealth of this ancient nation, to the modern western world. It has also helped preserve the tribal life style and its art forms against the onslaught of modern culture.

Though Christians are a minority in India, their welfare organisations and churches have played a vital role in nation building. They took initiative in organization and delivery of a wide variety of human schemes. The role of Christians role in the state has been impartial, neutral and peaceful during any communal riots or violence in the past. They have not taken part in any activity of the religious groups of any caste or culture. One cannot underestimate the role played by Amartya Sen and Mother Teresa in their respective fields for human welfare.

V

Participation of Christians in Politics After Independence

The purpose of the present chapter is to find out the level of the political participation of Christians in the country in general and in Punjab in particular. The main object of this study is to explore and analyse the political process, the electoral, the changing trends in different elections and representations of Christians in various committees, Boards and Commission and Legislative Council/Legislative Assembly as compared to other minorities, taking total population of the communities into consideration. But before doing so, it is necessary to know the role of Christian

\(^{50}\) Ibid.
community in the political arena of the state and the centre as well as in bureaucracy, armed forces, transport, business, agriculture and educational and hospital institutions both in Punjab and outside.

Before 1947, the British attitude provided a new lease of life to religion in politics. The British looked upon Indian people in terms of their religion. To them horizontal division not relevant. They deliberately emphasized vertical consideration. They introduced the politics of weightage and counted poise. They, thus, both directly and indirectly compelled the religious communities to strengthen their communal identities by introducing a separate electorate system in India, based on the religion.51

The introduction of separate electorates widened the gap between communities and permanently closed the possibility of a secular outlook to the problems of the community.52 The communities participated in politics as religious entities. Religion became the strongest factor which could sustain and promote or destroy of the common identity, so it was the desire of the architects of the constitution to abolish the separate electorate system in India. They abolished this system and introduced the joint electorate system in India. But the problem of minority communities was one of the most controversial issue before the pioneers of the constitution. The question of providing proper reservation and representation to minority communities in India became a stumbling block. On behalf of the Christian Community of India, H.C.Mookerjee and Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur both upper class Christians decided to give up all special privileges, just to make a goodwill gesture and to create a secular outlook among the majority. But in the bargain they sacrificed the interests of dalit Christians.

After Independence, a few prominent Christians like Raj Kumari, Amrit Kaur, a well known Christian from Punjab and John Mathai, who was Minister of Finance had risen to high political office. Raja Sir Maharaj Singh was Governor of Bombay from 1948 to 1952. He was also President of the Indian Christian Association and later

51 Shakir, Moin op.cit., 78.
52 Ibid, p. 78.
became a member of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches. The late H.C. Mookerjee, a Protestant, served as Governor of west Bengal in 1957. A.J. John, a devout catholic was appointed as Governor of Madras. N.K. Mookerjee was appointed as Governor of Punjab.\textsuperscript{53} Dr. P.C. Alexander was worked as a governor of Andhra Pradesh, even he was proposed as a candidate for the Presidentship of India by the NDA Government latter he was elected as a member of Rajya Sabha. A well known Christian J.M. Lyngdoh also worked as the Chief Election Commission of India.

It is necessary to have a look at the electoral picture of the previous Lok Sabha elections to obtain an idea about the trend of voting of Christian voters in India. The following table (6.2) shows the electoral trend of the members of minorities communities in India from 1952 to 1999.

Table No 6.2
Comparative Poll position in Lok Sabha\textsuperscript{54}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.No.</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Seats</th>
<th>Muslims</th>
<th>Christians</th>
<th>Sikhs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>489</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1962</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1967</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>542</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{53} Gen (Retd.) Rodrigues, S.F. was also appointed as Governor of Punjab in December, 2004.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.No.</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Seats</th>
<th>Muslims</th>
<th>Christians</th>
<th>Sikhs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>542</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>542</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>08</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


At present, many prominent Christians from different states of India have occupied key portfolios and are holding good position at Centre and have been elected many times as members of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha like P.C. Alexander, N.K.P. Salve, P.A. Sangma, Margrat Alva, Oscar Franandes, George Eden, John Joseph, Chittu Bhai, John Franandes, Hiphei, Fancisco, Geroge Frarndes Trida Topto, Mehal Rebello A. Lakshmi Sagar, Dr. P. Selvie Dass (Nominated) Onward L. Nogtdu C. Apok Jamir, T. Venkatram Reddy, S. Peter and Venlalzanoma were elected members of Lok Sabha & Rajya Sabha at various times.

George Fernandes a well known socialist leader who belongs to Christian community, has been included in the cabinet as Defence Minister of India in the NDA Government under the leadership of A.B. Vajpayee, P.A. Sangma also a well known personality was elected as a speaker of Lok Sabha during the regime of UDF
Government in 1991 and was supported by Congress party as well. Ajit Jogi, a well known Christian leader has been appointed as Chief Minister of Chhattigarh by Congress party. A.K. Anthony, a Christian leader in the Cong (I) has been elected as Chief Minister of Kerala. So far as the Punjab Christians are concerned, there is only one entrant in politics. In 1996, James H. Massey from Gurdaspur (Punjab) was appointed as a member of National Minority Commission (NMC) of India by the Janta Dal Government. After Partition, only a few Christians holding good positions in political field are noted.

Before 1947, very few Christians from Punjab passed through competitions in Civil Services of Centre and State Government and they held high positions in Punjab Government even after independence. Presently, a very few persons who have faith in Christianity are holding high positions in Punjab. A prominent Christian, Sardar Anjum from Punjab got Padam Shri Award in the field of Poetry in Urdu. Besides this, many Christian doctors, engineers, educationalists and other technical exports are working in Punjab with national spirit. Some Christians have been appointed by various Punjab Governments as a members of Khadi Board and Panjab Subordinate Services Selection Board (PSSSB) and some have been nominated as Director of BACKFINCO, Punjab. Some Christians, have been nominated many times as members of Governing body of Punjab School Education Board and various Universities of Punjab. Many Christians are employed in various mission institutions and are working effectively at highly responsible positions.

The following Christians were selected through competition, during the British time:

Gulam Kader and Mushtaq Masih and Kamal Bakshi were nominated by the Congress government in Punjab as members of Punjab Subordinate Selection Board in 1983, 1993 and 2003 and Munawar Massih was also appointed as a member of SS Board during Akali Government.
VI

Participation of Christians in Punjab Electoral politics

The role of Christians in the Punjab State on various political issues like, Punjabi Suba, Chandigarh issue, Khalistan, water dispute, 1984 anti Sikh riots, Anandpur Sahib resolution and in other Punjab problems have been impartial and neutral. They have played a peace makers during all communal- riots, terrorism, and violence in the past by taking part in peace efforts of all the religious group of all castes and creed. Although the Community played a neutral role during various Punjab problems still it affected the socio-economic conditions of the community. Many Christians were harassed and killed by the terrorist groups in Punjab alongwith other innocent people.

An inactive participation in electoral process of the State is very serious issue for the minority community i.e. Christian Community of the Punjab. The political role of this community in the pre-independence and post independence periods is considered negligible. It is an assumption that people from its community have inactive participation in politics due to socio-economic conditions and even hesitate to participate in the political life of the state. The major objective of this study to measure the political activities, involvement and participation of the community and their leaders in the political life in state and of the localities in which the Christian live. In this task, various political activities and patterns of attitude which are prevailing in the community have been traced in the context of the following questions:

(a) Whether it is true that Christian community in Punjab is political inactive and if this is so, to what extent and

(b) Whether it is true that socio economic conditions of the community are responsible for their inactiveness in the political life of the state.

Firstly, the finding of this study will help the community to understand the need for political participation and the problems related to such participation. Secondly, this study helps the leaders of the community by providing the useful information which
would contribute to making for greater participation of the community in state politics of the Punjab. Thirdly, this study helps the scholars for comparative study with other minority communities of the State.

With regards to the political participation of Christians, several obstacles were found. 

(a) Minority status and minority complex has considerably clipped and hindered Christians from taking the initiative in Punjab Politics.

(b) The lack of cohesion, is also a factor which has been responsible for hindered the Christian community from better participation in political life.

(c) Christian faith and orientation is a problem,

(d) Socio-economic backwardness as a problem,

(e) lower social status of Christians as a problems,

(f) Lack of dynamic Christian leadership and

(g) Lack of education.

The issue concerning the political participation of the Christian Community in Punjab was selected for study because of its relevance in the present political life of India. The changing trend in different elections and participation of Christians in various elections has been an eye opener since 1962 particularly in the Mahja area. Although the community has not been in a position to win any elections but they are a deciding factor during all the elections in Punjab. The main plank of Christians during elections has generally been that they along with other minority communities are being discriminated against by both the Congress and the Akali Dal. The participation of Sikhs in electoral politics in Punjab and their virtual monopoly in politics along with their communal feelings, whether in the Congress or the Akali party, has been a main obstacle in the way of Christian leadership. Secondly, Himachal Pradesh and Haryana have become as separate states. This separation changed the demographic composition

57 See Chapter III and IV in details.
of Punjab. These developments made the Sikhs a preponderate majority in all the districts of Punjab. So, it is very difficult for the minority like Muslim and Christians to jump into and penetrate the Punjab politics. Before 1935, Christians were allotted two seats in the Punjab legislative assembly. But after Independence, Legislative Council were suddenly abolished. Again in 1967, the Congress and the Akali party betrayed the Christian community and other groups by abolishing the legislative council in Punjab.

The primary focus of this study is to observe the participation of the community at various levels, i.e. in Panchayat, Municipalities and Corporations and political consciousness of community and their leaders.

The political participation, political activities and political understanding of the community is assessed by their general understanding of the political process prevailing in the country, their openness to political activity, their political expressions, their views about quality of their political leadership, and their capacity to organize themselves for any political expression in the total political framework of the state politics. However the main trends indicate that the overall political standing of the poor, dalit and rural Christians including their actual participation in the political process of the state and specially the participation in is limited part and their self perception of their political position and the need to involve in the political life of the state.

This study has discovered that a significantly large number of the Christian were aware of 'right to vote' during the election time and they do not hesitate to participate in various election. In response to the question asked, did you ever cast the vote in the election of Panchayat/Municipal level, Assembly level and Parliament level (91.66, 84.16 and 76.66) percent of respondent have stated in the favour of participation and very small percentage people showed no interest to cast their votes during election time. (See Table No. 4.0). In response the question asked, have you ever been pressurized to cast the vote during the election. The majority of the respondents (94.58 percent)

58 See in detail Chapter No. III
59 See Chapter No. III
expressed that they have no pressure during the election time. Actually, the dependence of the poor Christians on land card and the socio-economic conditions of the dalit Christians to compel them to cast their votes in favour of them. The poor socio-economic status of the community in Punjab has much to do with the character of their political participation. However, in spite of the disadvantages and disabilities suffered by them due to their lower socio-economic status, the analysis of the study also shows that the socio-economic status of the community in most of the villages in the Mahja area is no better than that of the Schedule Caste communities. It does not seem to have affected their general political participation much. In fact, it was discovered that dalit Christians living in lower socio-economic conditions are found to be more enthusiastic about political participation than those Christians who are comparatively better placed. But on the other hand, their disadvantageous socio-economic position has certainly affected their political aspirations and after denied them opportunities of entering into mainstream and active political life. The study of Vidya Sagar J. Dogar also shows that the large majority (90.57 percent) of the Christians have positive view of their participation in the political process of the country.

At the outset it can be said, that there are some Christians who have been active in the political leadership of the state. There are a few Christians who are Members, Panches and Surpanches of village Panchayats, towns or city Municipalities and Corporations. For many years a few Christians in Ferozepure, Amritsar and Gurdaspur district Municipalities, and Corporations have been found to be actively involved. In the above districts many Christians have been elected as Panches & Surpaches of village Panchayats and in towns and municipalities. The younger generation of community is found actively involved in Municipalities, corporations Vidhan Sabha and general elections. The slight involvement of the Christians in various elections bodies, can be useful for the community in the long run. This involvement can increase the Christian's

60 See Chapter No. III.
61 See Chapter No. III.
participation in Politics. The analysis of the study shows that Christians in Punjab are have less political attitude to contest the election. In response to the question asked did you contest the election? Very few percent of the respondents have stated that they contested the election (See Table No. 4.4 in Chapter No. III). Actually, the caste ridden society, Sikhs dominance their lower socio-economic conditions and backwardness is the main problem for the dalit Christians of the Punjab. In recent, February 2002, in a few of the city Jallandhar, Ludhiana, Amritsar and Patiala Corporation Election have been found to increase slightly and some of them found actively involved. In the election of Block Samiti and Zaila Prashed election took keen interest. Some Christians also contested the election as individual as well as on party ticket. Of course, at places where Christians have considerable numerical strength, in various villages & towns, they are elected, automatically, as community representatives. But at some places, the rich, landlords, agriculturalists and feudal persons use various means to capture the votes in their own favour and use the policy of divide and rule. (See appendix No. III). But, it was observed that the young generation and educated people of the community are found to be more favourable to politics than persons belonging to other age groups. Many times, it has been observed that places where Christian population is dominating or considerable, in villages, towns or Block Samiti the political parties always play a tricks with community. They reserve the seats for the women or scheduled classes. Sometimes the political leaders play tricks with Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes, and they converts the seat into general category. It is a fact that the elections in villages panchayat, town and municipal corporations, are always contested on the basis of group and party policy. The ruling party either Congress or Akali Dal, try to use various fair or foul means to capture the seats in the party's favour.

**Christians in various political parties**

The participation of Christians in various political parties is found to be very small, and is confined mostly to the Congress (I) which is the ruling party from February 2002 in the State. A few Christians have been appointed as office bearers in
their Party’s Executive or other Committees, at the State, town and district level. Some Christian leaders are working in the PPCC(I) Minority cell. The Convener of this Cell has always been appointed by the Congress from the Christian Community. Some Christians are members of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and some of them are supporters of Akali Dal (Badal). None of the Christians have enrolled as members of B.J.P. in the State.

Table No. 6.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Preferences</th>
<th>Mahja</th>
<th>Malwa</th>
<th>Doaba</th>
<th>Overall in Punjab</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Congress (1)</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>102 (42.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Akali Dal (Badal)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>54 (22.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Communist &amp; CPM party</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11 (4.58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>B.J.P.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5 (2.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>B.S.P.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17 (7.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14 (5.83)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>None of these</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>37 (15.42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table shows that:

(1) The Christians in all the regions of the Punjab mostly prefer the Congress (I) (42.5 percent of the respondents preferred this party.

(2) While a few, 22.5 percent respondents indicated their performance for the Akali Dal (Badal)

(3) It is a fact that the Congress party has a hold among the religious minorities as well as the weaker sections since many years. Ramesh Datt’s study showed, that majority of the Christians (66.66 percent had a liking for the
congress party. Akali Dal had 3.33 percent support of Christian voters. With the passage of time, Christian voters shifting from Cong (I) party to other political parties. The reason is only that Congress Party could not fulfill the expectation of the community.

(4) In the Doaba Area, B.S.P. has hold among the dalit Christians. In the Mahja region, Akali Dal and its alliances has much support. This shows that the popularity of Congress among the Christian voters is decreasing. This also means the support to non-Congress parties and membership of the Christian in various political parties like BJP, BSP, CPI and CPM and Akali Dal is alarming bells for Congress party.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Reasons to Support</th>
<th>Congress (I)</th>
<th>BJP</th>
<th>Akali Dal (B)</th>
<th>CPI and CPM</th>
<th>BSP</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Due to policy and Programme of this party</td>
<td>33 (13.75)</td>
<td>1 (0.42)</td>
<td>25 (10.42)</td>
<td>6 (2.5)</td>
<td>2 (0.83)</td>
<td>3 (1.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Due to the positive attitude towards minority</td>
<td>37 (15.42)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10 (4.17)</td>
<td>3 (1.25)</td>
<td>1 (0.42)</td>
<td>2 (0.85)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Due to the good leadership</td>
<td>12 (5.00)</td>
<td>3 (1.25)</td>
<td>6 (2.5)</td>
<td>1 (0.42)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3 (1.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Being a member of or supporter that party</td>
<td>04 (1.67)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>02 (0.83)</td>
<td>1 (0.42)</td>
<td>2 (0.83)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Any other reasons</td>
<td>06 (2.5)</td>
<td>1 (0.42)</td>
<td>06 (2.5)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6 (2.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>All the above</td>
<td>10 (4.17)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>05 (2.08)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table No. 6.4

Reasons for preferring the Political parties in Punjab


289
The above table shows that the larger majority of Christian community of the Punjab preferred the Congress. 13.73 and 15.42 percent respondents preferred the Congress due to policy and progress of this party and also due to the positive attitude towards minority. 10.42 percent of the Christians reported they supported the Akali Dal because of good policy and programme towards minority i.e. Christian community of the Punjab. Very few of the respondent preferred B.J.P. due to negative type of attitude of their supporters of B.J.P. towards missionaries, religious persons and Christian education institutions in recent years. But it does not mean Christians do not cast their vote in the favour of B.J.P. For example, in the election of 1998 and 1999, a majority of the Christians cast their vote in the favour B.J.P. candidate Vinod Khanna from Lok Sabha Constituency of Gurdaspur. There is a definite pattern in the party preference of community’s which shows a gradually shift from the congress and opted for alternatives behaviour they could find them. This change of allegiance is guided more by the secular concern to assert in the power structure in order to gain benefits. They have realised that the congress party has particularly nothing to offer for the community. What we observe in the latest elections of Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha, to our surprise, a different community voter who is no longer a ‘captive’ follower of the Congress. These elections highlights a new phase in their political consciousness, mobilisation and organisation in the Punjab.

In response to the question asked would you name the political party which takes special care of interests of the minorities especially of the Christians? Quite interesting result were found to this question. Very few respondent were in the favour of B.J.P. Majority of the respondents overwhelming support to the Congress party because this party is a secular and did a good job for the protection of minority. On the other side, Akali Dal is gaining the support of Christians in every election. (See table No. 5.2) The respondents stated that Akali Dal (1997-2002) did a good job especially for the Christian Community and a lunched many scheme like Shugan Scheme for the dalit Christians in Punjab. (see table no. 5.4)
Christian Community in Punjab Politics (1952-2002)

Regarding the role of the Christians in various elections, history certifies that the role of the Christian community. In Punjab, there was also a special provision of Legislative Council. In this Council, special representation has been given to a various religions in Punjab. On the religious basis, Bashiro Deen from the Christian community, was nominated as a member of Legislative council and also elected as a Deputy Chairman of council in 1952. He was nominated twice, being a Christian, in the Legislative Council. He did a lot of work for the rehabilitation of Christian community of Punjab.

During 1952-1970 some Christian leaders were active in Punjab politics. They formed an organisation named “Masih Saget”. A.G. Emile was the first President of this organization. S. F Deen become the President of this organisation after the death of Emile. On organisational basis, he was nominated as a member of Legislative council in 1958 and was also elected as a Deputy Chairman of Legislative Council. During the period from 1958 to 1967, he tried to unite Christians under the banner of “Masih Saget”.64 Sheela Emile the sister of A.G. Emile had been nominated to many committees like the Employment Committee, Cultural Affairs Committee, and Sports Committee by the Punjab Government. She was also nominated as a member of the advisory committee, Chandigarh. She put tireless efforts for the welfare of the community and was also a founder member of many clubs and organisations.

The slide down for the community started when Sardar Gurnam Singh formed the government in Punjab. Singh’s ministry passed a resolution and recommended the abolishing of the legislatives council with the help of some Congress MLAs in 1967. It was for the first time in Punjab when Akali Dal and some Congress leaders played dirty politics with various representatives of minorities, students, businessmen and teachers. Secondly Akali Dal wanted to abolish the hegemony of Congress party in legislative council, because the Congress was in the majority in this house.

64 Emile Sheela is a daughter of Emile, A.G. Expressed her views about ‘Masih Sagat’ in a personal interview in December, 2001, Chandigarh.
After 1967, Christians could not win any seat in legislative assembly. In 1972, when Gaini Zail Singh came to power, many Christians, at their personal level, put the pressure on government to give backward status to the Christians in Punjab. So, it was for the first time that the Congress regime, declared that Christian community be considered as a backward class in Punjab.

Although the socio-economic conditions were the main hurdle for the Christians in various elections but from time to time the situation, and circumstances molded the Christians along with other communities in various Vidhan Sabha and Lok Sabha elections in Punjab. The attitude of Christians changed due to many reasons and happenings. The following example to justify the changed attitude of the community. In 1977 Parkash Singh Badal formed a coalition government of Punjab with Janta Party as partners. The Christian community, for the first time, whole heartedly voted and supported it, as the Christians had always received a raw deal during the previous regime of Congress.

But after the formation and installation of the Badal government, the Christian community neither received any facility nor any proper representation in any government department. The community leaders did try to attach themselves to various sub-factions of the alliance, but failed to get any benefit. The Akali Dal and Janta Party refused to oblige the community in any manner. These political parties already knew that the community is not in a position and united to win the Vidhan Sabha Seats on its own because of the followings reasons:

(a) Socio-economic conditions of leaders do not allow to contest election;
(b) Higher castes hesitate to cast their vote in favour of the community.

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65 See Chapter No. 3.
TABLE NO 6.5

PUNJAB VIDHAN SABHA ELECTIONS:
PARTY WISE PERFORMANCE OF CHRISTIAN CANDIDATES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr No</th>
<th>Name of the Candidate</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Name Of the Party</th>
<th>Name Of the Constituency</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage of the total polled votes</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Issac B.Dass</td>
<td>Private Business</td>
<td>Matric</td>
<td>Akali Dal</td>
<td>Batala</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Lost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Prem Masih Randhawa</td>
<td>Private Service</td>
<td>Matric</td>
<td>Congress(O)</td>
<td>Dhariwal</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>Lost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ibrahim Irshad</td>
<td>School running</td>
<td>B.A., LLB</td>
<td>Congress (I)</td>
<td>Dhariwal</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>Lost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mushtaq Masih</td>
<td>Retd. Employees</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>Congress (I)</td>
<td>Shri Hargobindpur</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>Lost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Majid Masih</td>
<td>Contractor</td>
<td>Matric</td>
<td>Akali Dal (Mann)</td>
<td>Gurdaspur</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Less than 1 percentage</td>
<td>Lost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Munawar Masih</td>
<td>Transporter</td>
<td>M.A. (Eco.)</td>
<td>Akali Dal (Badal)</td>
<td>Gurdaspur</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>36.00</td>
<td>Lost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Willian John</td>
<td>Private Practice</td>
<td>RMP</td>
<td>B.S.P</td>
<td>Lohian</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Lost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Satpal</td>
<td>Agriculture Labour</td>
<td>Matric</td>
<td>Masih Lok (Mann)</td>
<td>Dina Nagar</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Lost</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table shows that:

(a) It was for the first time in the history of Punjab election, when the Akali Dal listed the name of a Christian leader named Issac B. Dass for Legislative
Assembly from Batala in 1980. Neither the Christians nor the Hindus cast their vote in favour of the Christian leader. He got only 6.2 percent votes of the total votes cast in the constituency. The purpose of the ticket Akali Dal in giving a to a Christian leader was to capture the Christian votes of the rest of the constituencies. But the Thagi Bill, harassment by Jan Sangh and the attitude of Akali Dal and Janata Party towards the community compelled it to cast its votes in the favour of Congress (I), Gopal Krishna Chattrath, former Advocate General of Punjab, from Congress (I) got a remarkable victory with the help of Hindu, Sikh, Dalit and Christian votes, from Batala. Assembly election, in 1980.

(b) It was for the first time in the history of Punjab Congress Party that a Christian Leader named Abraham Irshed, General Secretary, Punjab Youth Congress (I), contested the elections on a Congress ticket in 1985, for the Dhariwal Legislative Assembly election. Ibrahim Irshad gave a tough fight to the Akali candidate, Sucha Singh Chhotepur. But due to Longowal wave, the Congress (I) candidate lost the seat with a narrow margin. But the majority of Hindus voted in favour of Congress due to terrorism. Although the majority votes of Christians and Hindus were secured by the Congress (I) candidate, the landlords of various villages also managed dalits votes for the Akali party. Secondly, some Congress leaders also supported the Akali Dal just to defeat the Christian candidate. Thirdly, the Akali Dal also played a trick, and gave a ticket to Issac B. Das the Lok Sabha elections in order to gain the sympathy of the community. But Das got majority votes of the Sikhs, being a Panthic candidate, but could not secure the Hindu and Christian votes in this election.

(c) It has also been observed from the results of various elections, that Christians are not influenced by communal and religious considerations in the exercise of their vote. For example, in 1977, 1985 and 1997 elections, many Christian candidates contested the elections as independents. Even though the Christians have been harassed by the Jan Sangh for a long time, they supported the Akali Dal & Janta Party alliance in 1977. In 1985, during the Longowal wave, Akali
Dal managed to get the Christian support from many constituencies of Gurdaspur and Amritsar. The Dhariwal Vidhan Sabha constituency was an exception.

(d) In 1991, Congress (I) tried to oblige the Christians, during the terrorist movement, and gave a ticket of Mushtaq Masih Choudhary from Sri Hargobindpur. He left the Akali Dal and joined the Congress (I). But lost miserably because it was a strong hold of the Sikh community. Although in this constituency, there is very few poor Christian population, their votes have always been controlled by the rich, the landlord, the agriculturists and the feudal class of the various political parties. Due to the poor socio-economic conditions of Christian, they are compelled to vote in favour of landlord class. An active and educated Christian voters have always changed their loyalties with circumstances, particularly during the regime of Congress (I). In 1991-96, Congress leaders ignored the demands of the Christians and many Christian leaders announced their decision to support the Akali Dal - B.J.P. alliance. For example, Vinod Khanna who contested the elections in 1998 and 1999 from Gurdaspur Lok Sabha constituency won by capturing majority votes of Christians due to the following reasons:

Many political and religious leaders of the community pledged to support Akali - B.J.P. coalition government because Sukhbans Kaur Bhinder, the sitting M.P. for twenty years from this seat, never paid any attention towards the socio-economic conditions of the poor Christians in this area. It is also a fact that religion alone does not bind people. Instead, there are other factors which have equal relevance. The Christians have been favouring and voting for the Congress party since Independence. There has never been any rethinking about this trend by the leaders of Christian circumstances till now. But now, with changed circumstances and situation a clear minded policy in this regard is required, keeping future political plans of the community in view.
The history of political activities of the Christian leaders and organisers is that, when the elections came, they start demanding tickets or individual benefits from other major political parties of the State. Moin Shakir has rightly commented: "The role of the rural leaders of the minority communities is to strike a compromise with the political parties, and the ruling class. The ruling class always remains ready to "accommodate" this leadership of the minorities to maintain the appearance of "Consensus". The electoral participation of the minorities is intended to provide legitimacy to the system." When these political parties deny tickets to them, they actively support any other party without caring for their party's programme, ideology and manifesto.

From 1962 to 2002, many Christian leaders contested elections as independent candidates but the election results show that Christians are not influenced by the communal and religious consideration in the exercise of their right to vote. The analysis of this study also shows that community prefers political parties either Congress party or Akali Party than independent Christian leaders. Very few independent Christian candidates put the influence and change the result of Legislature Assembly elections in Punjab. The analysis of this table No. 6.6) study as under:-

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Name of constituency</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Name of candidate</th>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Patti Houshold Easther</td>
<td>Under Matric</td>
<td>1962</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Majitha Private Business Feroze Masih</td>
<td>Matric</td>
<td>1962</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Amristar (South) Contractor Sohan Lal</td>
<td>Matric</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Fatehgarh Business Fateh Masih</td>
<td>Matric</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Fatehgarh Agriculture Jalal Masih</td>
<td>Under matric</td>
<td>1962</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Majitha Retd. From Army Basket Masih</td>
<td>Under Matric</td>
<td>1967</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Ajnala -do- Basket Masih</td>
<td>Under matric</td>
<td>1967</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Voltowa Private Workshop Samuel Mall</td>
<td>Matric</td>
<td>1967</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Fatehgarh Teacher Pari Gill</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>1967</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Fatehgarh Private Service William Masih</td>
<td>Matric</td>
<td>1967</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Fatehgarh Business Patrik</td>
<td>Matric</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Qadian Pvt. Service Sqdiq Masih</td>
<td>Matric</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Dhariwal Retd. From Army Basket Masih</td>
<td>Under Matric</td>
<td>1969</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Dhariwal Advocate Kailash Samual</td>
<td>B.A., LLB</td>
<td>1969</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Gurdaspur Pvt. Service Fazal Masih</td>
<td>Matric</td>
<td>1967</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Fatehgarh Housewife Hamida Tuful</td>
<td>Under Matric</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Ajnala Contractor Omar Masih</td>
<td>Matric</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Qadia Pvt. Service Santokh Masih</td>
<td>Matric</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Dhariwal Housewife V.M. Rao</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Gurdaspur Retd. Govt.service Yunus Masih</td>
<td>Matric</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Dhariwal Retd. From Army Usha Sidhu</td>
<td>B.Sc. Nursing</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Ajnala Unemployed D. Dass</td>
<td>Matric</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Kahnuwan Unemployed Narinder Masih</td>
<td>Matric</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above table concludes that:

(1) Many Independent candidates from the Christian community contested the elections to Vidhan Sabha (1952 to 2002) from the Mahja belt of Punjab. But they lost miserably and could not even save their security deposit. They have no political background. Table No.6.6 shows that Christians voters are not bound or influenced by the communal and religious considerations in the exercise of their right to vote. The community does not necessarily prefer Christian independent candidates just because they are from the same faith or religion. Actually the socio-economic conditions of the community compels it to cast vote in favour of the landlord, rich and zamindar class of the village.

(2) The higher castes and fanatic peoples do not favour Christian candidate, either from Congress (I) or Akali Dal. For example, Issac B.Dass contested the election on Akali Dal ticket in 1980 from the dominate Hindu constituency i.e. Batala Vidhan Sabha Constituency, but failed to muster the votes of Hindus. Salamat Masih contested the election from Dhariwal in February, 2002 but could not secure the votes of Sikhs and Hindus. He forfeited his security deposit. But the case of Munawar Masih was different, because the Sikhs cast their votes in the name of Sikh Panth and on the appeal of Prakash Singh Badal, President Akali Dal (Badal). He secured maximum votes of Sikhs but failed to secure Hindus votes. So he was defeated by the Congress candidate Khushal Behl. (See Table No. 6.5)

(3) Votes are controlled by various means viz. money & liquor, gift, donation, etc. by the political parties and Zamindars. During the election time, Zamindars and upper caste become very polite and give a good impression. Besides this there are also internal and external factors which control the votes of Christian community. Vidya Sagar
expressed that reason for this is the lack of political consciousness and wisdom. Many people say and also observed during the personal survey during the election time that the Christians accept liquor to cast their vote. They even accept money at the last moment to cast votes. Many independent candidates are dishonest and accept money to withdrawn their nomination just before the elections start.

(4) Performance of the candidates show that the Christians voters are attached with the political parties, landlord and political leaders indirectly. Independent Christian candidates have no means to capture the Christian votes. Only a few communal voters favour the Christian candidate during the election time. Some times, Christian candidates take money and withdraw their nominations. They have no finance, no support and no manpower. So it is impossible for them to contest election.

(5) Neither the Akali Dal nor the congress (I) have any inculcation to field a Christian candidate on their party ticket as they already knows that Christian votes can be managed easily through various means. Actually the caste structure of the Christian society does not offer a congenial atmosphere for the community. Political parties always play clever tricks during the election time and hesitate to give ticket to any Christian candidates in the Lok Sabha or Vidhan Sabha in Punjab. Although majority of Christians are in favour of Congress party but the during election time Christians have no unity to put pressure on Congress high command to field their candidate on Congress tickets. Sometimes, it is sweet will of the Congress Party to put Christian candidate to capture the Christian voters.

68 During the election time, they participate in Masih Convention, Prayer meeting. They are blessed by the Pastor during the visit of Church. Leaders always play many tricks like praise of Jesus Christ, Halleloloyia, donation to Churches etc. So they make Christian religion as a tool for securing votes of the Christians during the election time.
(6) Malarkotla is the Vidhan Sabha constituency of Sangrur district in Punjab where the Muslims always dominate and have began elected for many years, Congress and Akali Dal always field Muslim candidate only. Because all political parties already know political attitude of Muslim voters during the election time. They used Fanatic and communal approach during the election time. They preferred Muslim candidates either from Congress or Akali Dal. Similarly, the Dhariwal Vidhan Sabha constituency is dominated by the Christian votes. In this constituency, both parties hesitate to put the Christian candidate in the election, because both already know the poor socio-economic conditions of the community. Secondly, the Christians do not exercise the communal approach. In case both these parties field and support a Christian candidate, it will be very easy for the Christians win in every election of Vidhan Sabha from here.

(7) Christian have no political unity to raise the voice against political parties in Punjab. The Christian leaders feel that Church leadership is discouraging this unity. Even the social welfare associations which are supposed to serve as agents for integrating community are equally responsible for disintegration of the Christian Community. Even, it is also observed that various denominations are also equally responsible for disunity of the community in the Punjab. Church leadership wants to make own hold in political affairs. So, they always ignore the lay leaders. It is difficult for lay leaders of the community to get help without religious leaders.

(8) Many independent candidates belong to very poor families. Even, not a single member of their families posted on key position anywhere in the state. They are known as landless agricultural labour, private service and leather businessman, contactors, mill or factory workers, and very few hold less than five acres land. They have no source of extra income

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to contest elections. All have miserable senior economic conditions.

(9) Regarding the education, majority of the independent candidates are Matric or undermatric. The education status of the community leadership is not remarkable and helpful for the community. They do not know the strategy, policy, programmes, ideology of the political parties. Every they are failed to understand the problems of community and could not chalk out strategy for power politics in Punjab.

**Christians and their various groups**

The above situation is because of the absence of a proper organizational structure and ability to bring political consciousness among the Christians, and the absence of a single platform to fight for socio-economic and political in justice for community. The community has a number of able Christian leaders, but they are divided into various political groups. One of the groups is led by Munawar Masih, who is supporting Akali-B.J.P. alliance in Punjab. Another group led by Salamat Masih and Kamal Bakhshi is supporting Congress (I). A third group, led by Hamid Masih, President, Punjab Christian Movement has independent thinking. Many religious leaders and prominent Christians are also members of Punjab Christian Movement and many times they have fielded some independent candidate against political parties but always failed to take support of the Christian community.

The fourth group, led by father Robby and Usha Sandhu, has organised the community by taking the support of various factious and missions and has formed a political party, named 'Punjab Masihi Lok Dal'. Eight major missions have united under the new banner. The reason to float the new party is that both Congress and Akali Dal have gone back on their commitment and have ignored the community in the state despite of full political support given by the Christians during their regimes.

Although Punjab Masihi Lok Dal took a lot of initiative to organise the
Christians but failed to impress the community on the right path. During the election time, this Masihi Dal made alliance with Akali Dal (Panthak Morcha), (Mann & Tohra) groups and could not get success in the election. Although they failed in their aim, but it was the first time, they got out of the barriers of denominations and formed one platform in the Punjab politics. Particular, Congress and Akali Dal (Badal) both became very conscious for capturing the votes of the community. Then both political parties tried to oblige the Christian Community by listing the name of Christian candidates from Dhariwal and Gurdaspur for Assembly election.

During the election time, some anomic group from the community in various parts of Punjab, try to organize the Christians at State level. On the behalf of community, they support and compromise with political parties for their selfish motive. All political parties always hesitate to give party tickets because these parties already know the political incapability and socio-economic problems which are the major obstacle in the way of politics. Even some of the anomic groups are in favour to form Christian political party but it is only fill the election time. After that, no political party recognized them. So, in Punjab, there is no relevance of such type of anomic Christian groups. Secondly, the Congress party in Punjab has no positive attitude towards organizations and leadership of the community. When the Congress party is out of power then always talk about the welfare of the community when the Congress party's in power, they never realized the support of the community. Thirdly, on the issue of leadership, Congress leaders in the Mahja area always play trick and try to create new Christian leader in every Vidhan Sabha election for their political motive and ignored the other Christian leaders.

The socio-economic backwardness of the Christian leaders does not allow the community to assume a good position in the Punjab Politics. They always depend on other non-Christians leaders. The lack of socio-economic status, position and sources, they always hesitate to enter in an active politics.
of the Punjab. From time to time many, Christian leaders try to organise the community through various organizations and welfare associations but have failed miserably due to many weaknesses.

A contradiction between Church leaders and other leaders is also observed during this study. There is a race between both, the lay leaders who want to make political hold among the Christians and Church leaders who do not recognize and give support in political affairs. Actually the various denominations and Church leaders are creating problem in the way of unity of the community. They are creating a fear in the minds of congregation not to participate in politics. The people from various denominations always give support to religious or Church leaders not to lay leaders and not to any leader of the community. Religious leaders hesitate to announce support to the Christian candidate during the election time.

Although it was the first time, when all the denomination came together and form a political front "Punjab Masihi Lok Dal" under the leadership Father Robby from Catholic Mission but Protestant Mission and Independent Churches criticized this leadership and did not provide support during the election time. The lay leaders of the community and supporter of Congress and Akali party also tried to sabotage this front 'Masihi Dal', in Punjab. So, internal contradiction and politics between the both groups has become another obstacle in the way of active participation of the community.

A lack of good leadership is the main problem for the community. Churches, missions and education institutions have failed to produce good leaders within the community. Respondents have the different options on this issue in response to the question asked why the Christian leadership is not successful in Punjab as shown in Table 6.7 below:
Table No. 6.7
Respondents response on Christian leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Differences due to many denominations</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>2.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Lack of good, honest and efficient leadership</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>26.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Christians are in Minority</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Landlord and Sikh leaders do not in favour of Christian leadership.</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Lack of unity and Political organisation</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>17.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Due to deorable economic conditions</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>34.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Political parties do not in favour of Christian leadership</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Any other reason</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>No response</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>240</td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The study attempts to evaluate the assessment of respondents towards the leadership. The above table shows the distribution of the respondents on the issue of Christian leadership. In this response, the above table clearly shows that due to the deorable conditions of the community and its leaders they could not successful in political field upto to this date. About 34.58 percent respondents accepted that poor economic conditions are the main reason for the leadership. In the second place about 26.25 percent expressed their feeling that there is a need for a good, honest and efficient leaders for the community. A selfish and dishonest leadership cannot give right direction to community on the right path. In the third place 17.92 percent respondents have the feeling of unity. They also expressed that there is a need of strong political organisation in the Punjab.
There are about 40 organizations working in Punjab but none except Punjab Christian movement has a concerted approach in all fields. All the political parties take advantage of diversity in the community. They are unable to make any impact in the decision-making process because, they have different denominations, leg pulling, church politics, and lack of trust etc. In the political dimension, at various places in the Mahja region, they have achieved power position at the local level as a panch / surpanch. Various organization and welfare associations define their purpose but from time to time they put influence on the government (See appendix VI and VIII) and raise many demands such as:

1. Nomination of the Christians to various corporations, boards, committees, local bodies;
2. Upper House of Punjab be revised;
3. At least give Assembly constituencies of Punjab be reserved for the Christian community and nominate at least one Christian in Rajya Sabha;
4. Protection against the excesses committed and harassment meted out in the hands of upper castes and police etc;
5. Christian festivals be celebrated at state and national level;
6. A Christian regiment be established in Indian Army and
7. Government should provide SC/ST facilities as a Christian.

From time to time, many organization/associations have approached the Minority Commission to convey their demands to the Centre and State Government Punjab Christian Movement also submitted a memorandum on 25.5.1997 at Lions Club, Jalandhar (See Appendix VII) to James H. Massey, Member, National Minority Commission. Indian Christian Welfare
Association also submitted a memorandum to Balwant Singh Ramoowalia at Chandigarh and appealed to recommend the above said demands of the Punjab & Chandigarh Christians.

In Punjab, the Dalit Christians have begun forming associations amongst themselves which will challenge what they perceive to be unjust domination and exploitation by majority communities and the upper castes. Privileged groups have also begun to counter organise. Although Christians were quiet for some time, but the new generation of the Christians and educated class of the community is organizing itself to fight for socio-economic and political justice. Vidya Sagar J. Dagar expresses in his study that majority of the Christians are strongly in favour of organising a political party within the state. The political parties, in Punjab, cannot ignore the community for long time, because they know that the community is of consequence in the political situation in Punjab. Christians are considered as a deciding factor in more than 15 Vidhan Sabha constituencies of Mahja belt and two Lok Sabha constituencies of the Punjab (See Table 1.4) Although Statistical Abstracts Punjab, Government agencies and Census Report show religious data in table No. 1.4 but Christians claim that Christian demography by various government agencies is incorrect because (a) census officer consider dalit Christians in schedule caste category; (b) they do not have much knowledge about caste, sub-caste, community, religions and various categories. Various Christian leaders, Church records, Missions and various denominations have claimed and show the different percentage. Secondly,  

69 The various denominations, churches and Christian organizations are showing the following votes percentage (approximately) in various Legislature Assembly Seats in Punjab, Fatehgarh Churhia: 29-34; Dhariwal 30-35; Ajnala 22-27; Valtowa 17-22; Verka 16-21; Qadian 15-20; Sri Hargobindpur 12-17; Gurdaspur 15-20; Dinnagar 10-15; Pathankot 10-15; Mukerian 12-17; Dera Baba Nanak 25-30; Batala 12-15; Kahuwan 17-22; Majetha 16-21;

In the Doaba region Jallandhar North and South, Sham Chaurasi and Adampur have around about 10 percent votes in all Assemblies. In the Malwa Region Ludhian, Nroth and South, Khanna Moga City, Ferozepur city, Patiala City, Zirakpur, Khurara have considerable votes in Punjab.
all of them have formed one political front known as “Punjab Masih Lok Dal” under the leadership of Father Robi, a priest of Catholic Church. In the recent election (Feb. 2002), all political parties paid attention to Christians and tried to oblige the Christian candidates. The growing injustice with the community is mainly political in nature.

Although the Christians in Punjab are socio-economically very poor and needy but psychologically and morally they have become very confident to raise their voice against any sort of exploitation and oppression at any level. They have expressed their voice and organised rallies from time to time against exploitation against themselves. The social consciousness generated by the community organisation and the Church activities have played an important role in making them confident enough to gear up their struggle against religious discrimination, particularly where the Christian population is concentrated in considerable numbers in Punjab.

In response to the question asked did you participate in the rally/protest against discrimination/atrocities in recent years, 67.5 percent of respondent have stated in the favour of participation which were organized by the Churches or Christian organizations in Punjab. 8.75 percent of respondent did not respond. 23.75 percent of respondent have stated that they were not in the favour of rally or protest due to the following reasons (see chapter 3) (a) Being Government employees or (b) 6.25 percent did not have interest in participating in protest or rally (c) 4.16 percent said that they are busy in own business (d) they are very seldom involved in violent rally/strikes, but they have strong feelings against atrocities or discrimination.

The socio-economic conditions of the community is the main obstacle in the way of various political activities in Punjab. Sometimes, when the rally/strike or demonstration is organised by political parties either by Congress or Akali Dal, they are managed by them by adopting various means for participation. But this participation does not involve participation on
behalf of the whole community. Although the majority of the Christians belong to agricultural labours in rural areas but they are neither organized nor members of any worker or labour union in Punjab.

Table No. 6.8
Religious Composition of Political Parties and Christians
Assembly Elections (1952-2002)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Congress (Elected)</th>
<th>Akali Dal (Elected)</th>
<th>Christian Leader Contested but lost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hindus</td>
<td>Sikh</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Who's who, from 1952-2002, Punjab Vidhan Sabha, Chandigarh and also see Punjab Election office, Chandigarh and also see J.S. Grawal and Indu Banga, Punjab in prosperity and violence (eds); Institute of Punjab Studies, Chandigarh, 1998, pp. 61-64.
The Above Table concludes that:-

Prior to 1967, the number of Hindu and Sikh M.L.A.s was almost the same. From 1967 to February 2002, the number of the Hindus is decreasing. Hindus M.L.A.s have good rapport with urban population in Punjab. Table 6.8 shows that the majority of the Hindus are elected from the Congress party. After 1967, in Punjab, the Sikh community has made its dominance in Congress as well as Akali Dal in the Punjab politics. While taking into consideration the caste background of the Congress legislators, it was found that during 1960s and 70s the Jat Sikhs formed the single largest caste group in the State assembly. In the elections of the 1967, 1972, 1992 and 2002, almost half of the total Congress MLAs were Jat-Sikhs. On the other hand the Akali Dal is known as a religious party and between 1952 and February 2002 the majority of Sikhs were elected on Akali ticket. Hindus, Muslims and Christians have a very small chance in Akali Party.

The Akali Party fielded Christian candidate in 1980 and again in 2002 but they failed to win any seat. The Congress party fielded Christian candidates in, 1985, 1992 and 2002, but could not win in any election. The existence of a Muslim candidate is constant from 1952 to 2002 mostly from the Congress. Parties, whether Congress or the Akali Dal always oblige Muslim community from the Malerkotla Assembly seat. Both the parties are afraid of the communal approach of the Muslim community. Thus, it is an easy issue for the Muslim candidate to win the election comfortably either on Congress or Akali Dal ticket. But it is impossible for the Christian Community to win from Dhariwal Constituency because Congress and Akali Dal play tricks with the disunited Christian minority. The socio-economic conditions and Sikh dominance is the main problem in the way winning the elections. Secondly, the Christians have a non communal approach in the political affairs. The above analysis, particularly in the terms of Sikh participation in electoral politics in Punjab shows that they have a virtual monopoly over the political
power in the State. Elections from 1967 to 2002 show that Sikh's representation in terms of number of MLAs who won in different Vidhan Sabha elections is much bigger in proportion to their total population and in comparison Hindus have got much less representation than their population. Muslims have only one representation and on the other side Christian have no place from 1952 to 2002 in the Punjab Assembly Elections. It is clear that there is discrimination against the Christians as a matter of fact they have no proper representation and reservation as a minority community.

It cannot be justified that Christians in politics are politically inactive and backward in the matter of general political participation. It looks as though the Christian community is not found actively involved in politics of the Sikh State. Again, as far as the Christian community's general attitude to Punjab politics is concerned, it is not very satisfactory. Secondly, the socio-economic backwardness is the main factor for political inactiveness is found justified. As far as transport business and agriculture sector is concerned in Punjab, it is mostly in the hands of non-Christians. It is also important to mention that there is very little representation of Punjabi Christians in IAS, IPS, BSF, CRPF and IFS. Basically, Christians are agriculturist labourers in rural area of the Punjab. There is need of socio-economic upliftment of the community. Some other problems such as to lack of cohesion within the community and the 'minority community complex' are discovered to hinder in one way or the other, political participation of Christians in Punjab politics. The need for improving and an active involvement in political affairs can be solved in the following manner :-

(a) By uniting the Christian community and their leaders on the single political platform.
(b) By providing political education to the poor and backward Christians.
(c) By improving the socio-economic condition of the community.
(d) By amending the Constitution of India for their social status and
including some special provisions by providing some facilities and representation for the dalit Christian for their upliftment.

The main plank of Christians has generally been that they are being discriminated and betrayed against by Akali and Congress in the Punjab and other ruling parties at the centre. From the above analysis it can be proved that Christians participate in political life of the state. (Table 6.8) shows that there is virtual monopoly of the Sikhs in the Sikh State over political power. The scope of minorities entirely depend, upon the Sikh leaders. On the other hand, the Sikhs leaders cannot be blamed as because much depends on the minority leaders who play politics with their own people as they have the sole agenda, and that is, to penetrate into the State politics at any cost. There is a need for unity between Church leaders and other leaders for good strategy in order to find active participation in politics.