CHAPTER - 7

SUMMARY AND FINDINGS

The various studies and traditions show that the history of Christians in India date back to Apostle St. Thomas, one of the disciples of Jesus Christ who not only visited South India but also came to Taxila in Northern India. This study shows that there is also historical evidence of Christian settlement in Kerala (South India). St. Thomas founded seven Churches or group of Christians at various places. It is also believed that traders from East Syria and Persia settling in Malabar, brought the traditions of the Church founded by St. Thomas with them. The year 52 A.D. is now accepted by most of the scholars, as the period for the arrival of St. Thomas at the reputed part of Cranganor in Malabar. The traditions of Malabar witnessed and certified that St. Thomas was the discipline who came to India to preach the Gospel and suffered Martyrdom in India.

The history of Christianity in India from the first century A.D. upto the sixteenth century is virtually the history of the Syrian Christians of Kerala who first came to Malabar (India) and established the Christian Church in South India and converted many people. In the year 345 A.D. many Syrian Christian migrated into Malabar and they developed rituals and a life style and also followed Syrian rites. The Syrian and Malabar Christians soon entered into matrimonial relations and merged into a single community. After this many missionaries came to India. In the third century Bishop of Basra who came between 295-300 A.D. and evangelized many people. Around the year 522 A.D. a Christian merchant of Alexandria named Cosmas also visited India. In the third and fourth century under the Persian region, the Christians were terribly persecuted partly on religion grounds because the Persian kings wanted to revive the national religion of Zoroastrinion. The period of the Syrian Christian opened a new gate not only for merchants and pilgrim of Syria but also for European missionaries in India. They put a lot of efforts to preach the Gospel and also tried to maintain the mission of St. Thomas and Bartholomew in India.
The rise of Islam and the dominance of the Indian scene by Muslims affected the affairs of the Syrian Christian badly. After the Muslim dominance, there is little history of the Syrian Christians in India. Romo Syrian and Jacobite struggled to maintain themselves. Both built churches in various places particular in South India. From time to time Romo Syria appointed some Bishops for the unification of Romo Syrian and Jacobite. In the eighteenth century, Malabar, like the eastern side of the peninsula suffered the ravages of war and many Syrian Christians were killed. In 1799, Tipu Sultan was defeated by the British Governors and government appointed two official to protect the interest of the Syrian Christians in India. British missionaries gave full co-operation to the Syrian Christians. But the trouble between the Syrian Christians and the missionaries arose when missionaries stressed the need to introduce many reforms in the Syrian Church. Although the Syrian Christians rejected the view of missionaries but the work of Syrian Church was deeply affected. After this, Syrian Christians were divided in the Catholics, the Jacobites and the Mar Thomaites and the Orthodox Syrian Church. All the divisions of the Churches are still operating in various states of India.

The role played by the missionary in India, from time to time, has been remarkable. Robert De Nobili is known as the pearl of India. He did a lot of work in literature that cannot be ignored. William Carey, Marden and Ward, the trio of the Serampore Mission, also contributed to the growth of Bengali, Marathi and Sanskrit literature and their most valuable contribution was the introduction of the printing press in India. It was Ziegenbalg and Plutschau who landed at transquebar and set up a Tamil printing press in the Tamil Country.

St. Francis Xavier (1506–1552) and Robert de Nobili did a lot of work in India. After this, Protestant missionary started their work in India. Protestant missionary work first began with Danish Lutherans at the beginning of the eighteenth century and gained great momentum eventually at the end of the eighteenth century and thereafter with the coming of the Baptist William Carey to the Danish settlement of Serampore near Calcutta in 1793. He translated the Holy Bible into many languages thereby making it accessible to a larger number of people.
During the Pastoral Phase, British government encouraged Christian propaganda and also adopted a purely pastoral approach to development which was most suitable to the interest of the colonial rule. They got involved themselves in social work and relief work. They baptized and converted many downtrodden people of the society. They also started the Western educational system and propagation of English in various parts of the country. Various movements against child marriage, female infanticide and Sati were started to get support and sympathy of the Indian people.

This study is mainly related with Christians in Punjab and expansion of Christianity in Punjab (Northern India) is also related with the Apostle St. Thomas who also visited Taxila in Northern India during the time of King Godophoros. Numerous coins, bearing the name of Godophoros and discovered in North West India, are viewed as constituting a collateral evidence for the presence of the Apostle Thomas in West India. Christianity had attained foot-hold in the Parthian Empire mainly in Mesopotamia. From 410 AD the Church had organized its working and independent Churches of Roman Empire came into existence.

Churches of the East also showed the work of Bishop in the fifth and sixth centuries in Pakistan (Punjab). There seems to be an organized Church in the East and South Afghanistan. Important eyewitness accounts of the Church in the early sixth century are given by Cosmos Indikopleutes in his Christian topography, written about 547 A.D. A letter of the Patriarch Isher Yab III written about 650 AD speaks of Christians expending upto the Persian border. The 1301 manuscript evidence shows that the Metropolitan of India was definitely stationed at Cranganur near Bombay and Thane. Under Shah Abbas from Iran who (1587-1629), build 24 Churches to influence merchant community. In 1711 Dutch Ambassador also visited Lahore and met an American Bishop and some Jesuit priests. Akbar the Great invited the Jesuits mission of Goa and requested to send missionaries to his court. The missionaries work began in 1594 with the arrival of Father Jerome Xavier and he did a lot of evangelistic work among Muslims. He planned to build a church in Lahore in 1587 and started Missionary work in Sind (Pakistan) in Punjab in 1618.
The Christian faith spread in Punjab virtually through conversion of the down-trodden people of the society by the missionaries. They were greatly successful among the lower, deprived and depressed castes of the Punjab Society. They set up many educational institutions, hospital and mills and also made Lahore Ludhiana and Ambala as central points for missionary work.

The history of Christianity in the present Punjab State may be traced from 1834 when John C. Lowrie an American Presbytenian established the first mission at Ludhiana. It was the central place in the Presbyterian Mission of American and the aim was to maintain link and contact with Afghanistan, Kashmir and Tibet. Gradually the number of Presbyterian missions started their work. The activities of the missionaries impressed the depressed people and facilitated in conversion. They opened mission stations, churches, hospital and educational institutions. Most of these mission stations and school were supervised by a missionary. In fact, the mission school offering education become the major sign of the Christian in Punjab. They were to become an important means through which Christianity made its social and cultural impact upon Punjab.

From 1858 to 1885, twenty four new mission stations were set up including American, Methodists, the Roman Catholics and the Salvation Army. The Church Missionary Society started its work at Amritsar and opened medical and educational institutions. The Christian missionaries came to Punjab on the invitation of the British officials and they prepared to establish mission in the areas ruled directly by the British. The primary purpose of the missionaries who came to Punjab in the nineteenth century was evangelion. They preached the Gospel in towns, villages and Basti and distributed sacred scriptures among the people. Many outstanding educational institutions were established to develop the western education in the English language. John Newton also prepared Punjabi dictionary. Hindi grammar was prepared by Samuel Kellogg.

Many educational institutions in Punjab were established by the Christian missionaries. They also worked only in those areas where the common and dalit people were neglected and discriminated against by the high caste society. So in Punjab,
the missionaries were known, *mai bap* of the down-trodden people. They elevated the neglected classes to high social position and also helped in removing the evils of child marriage and caste system. The same work was adopted by Brahmo Samaj, Prardhana Samaj, Arya Samaj and the Rama Krishna Mission in the Nineteenth century which was indirectly designed by the missionaries.

At present, many Christian religious groups and denomination are functioning in Punjab. The Christian in Punjab are about two percent of the total Punjab population. Known as microscopic minority in Punjab they have a strong feeling of being discriminated at the hands of the majority communities and the government.

*Firstly*, the main hypothesis of this study is that the Socio-Economic and backwardness does not seem to have directly affected much the general political participation. (Table 4.0) Christian Community of Punjab has shown participation in Panchayat / Municipal Corporations, Assembly and Lok Sabha elections. In parliamentary elections, Christians show less interest due to non-familiants with the Lok Sabha candidates.

An overwhelming majority of Christians do feel the necessity for participating in politics. As far as active political involvement is concerned, definitely they are backward, compared with other minority communities like Muslims and Dalit Sikhs of the Punjab. Therefore, that Christians are politically inactive cannot be justified to the full extent and the Punjabi Christian Community cannot be said to be backward in the matter of general political participation. But as far as the Punjabi Christian Community is participation is concerned, it is not very satisfactory. In the rural areas, their votes are controlled by the landlords of the various political parties. Their socio-economic conditions always compelled them to cast their vote in the favour of landlords and rich persons of the society. In addition to this problem, some other problems such as the lack of cohesion within the community and the ‘minority community complex’ are discovered to hinder political participation of Christian in Punjab. It is indeed, to provide various types of facilities to improve their socio-economic status. It is upto the community’s leadership to motivate the community and develop its positive attitude towards political participation. The Christian community must learn to think on the
basis of the interests of the whole human community and not just in terms of its own interests. The religious leaders and other leaders of the community must take on its own shoulders the responsibility for better participation in active politics.

(a) Combined efforts should be made in the matter of political education and action.

(b) Formulation of Political front or political party is a great need for the community.

(c) Christians should be encouraged to become members of political parties and to contest in elections whenever possible in village panchayats or municipal or other elections.

(d) The Church should support to community leaders and establish contacts with those few Christians who are involved in politics. Proper encouragement should be given to their work, depending on each case.

(e) Churches / government should make sincere efforts for their socio-economic development.

The study also analyses that the socio-economic hierarchy of the landlords and Jat Sikhs in the political institutions like village panchayat, Vidhan Sabha, Lok Sabha, corporations, boards and cooperative societies are the principle means through which the landlords deprive the dalits of the fruits of their labour. It has been observed in Mahja region, that landlords are elected as Sarpanch of the village in the majority of the Christian voters. Landlords always use the policy of divide and rule among the Christians. It is also the socio-economic compulsion of the community to elect the landlord in the village as a Sarpanch and Panch. It is also fact that elected Panch and Sarpanch of the community has no actual political role in the village affairs. Twenty villages have been selected for the study. Not a single candidate was found to be elected as a Sarpanch of a village in the Majha, Malwa and Doaba region in the recent elections of the Punjab. (See Chapter No. III) Tables 4.4 and 4.5 show that Christian candidates’ hesitate to contest the various elections due to their socio-economic conditions. Actually, the socio-economic and political hierarchy of landlord and
richmen do not allow them to contest the elections. Secondly, in the caste ridden society, caste is the main consideration of the voters. Table no. 4.6 shows that higher caste hesitates to caste the vote in the favour of Christian candidate. So, is a fact, that social indignities and economic disabilities have become problem for a community. This disadvantageous position of socio-economic backwardness has certainly altered their political aspirations and often denied them opportunities of entering into active political life.

Another major finding of this study is that conversion to Christianity actually has not brought a big change in socio-economic status. Many social historians who have studied the nineteenth and early twentieth century mass conversions to Christianity state that the motivation of the converts was mainly social. The desire to find release from castes slavery and acquire some social status was the motive behind conversions. But their dreams were not fulfilled even after conversion.

Inspite of their conversion to Christianity, they have suffered a serious discrimination and degradation in society. Table 1.6 shows that Christians in Punjab converted from the downtrodden class and adopted the Christian religion. After this, they continued to face discrimination: Firstly, alongwith dalits in general, and secondly, on the basis of religion. Although their conversion to Christianity was a protest against the obnoxious caste system and though they had joined the Church seeking liberation and solace in the new community, the Church has not only failed to fulfil their expectations but even discriminated against them. Panjab State has given a lot of facilities to the Scheduled Caste people, but these facilities are not meant for economically weaker section like Dalit Christians. Tables 1.9 and 2.0 show that the majority of the respondents in Panjab are still considered as a lower caste and have low standard of living. Christians in Punjab are landless. Backwardness, poverty alongwith low social status and illiteracy are considered by the Christians leaders to be the major problems faced by the community. After conversion to Christians they have lost the right to reservation in governments jobs. In rural areas, they are always under debt and under the control of landlord class. A large majority of rural Christian of Mahja region have deplorable conditions. Socio-economic problems have compelled
them to work in the landlords fields. So they are exploited socially and economically by the landlords and higher castes in Punjab. All these the facts show that conversion to Christians has not brought a big change in socio-economic social status of the community in Punjab.

Thirdly, the Christians in India as well as in Punjab are suffering the same problems of discrimination in the community. Their problems, in general are an integral part of the overall Dalit problems in this country. They have a feeling that there is a violation of their constitutional rights. Discrimination against dalit Christians in the matters of employment, promotion in public services, economic benefits and facilities in education is becoming the policy of the state. In general the state discriminates against minority schools, colleges, nursing colleges and hospitals in granting aid. The state government has imposed many limitations to prevent minority schools from appointing their own teachers. Economic exploitation, and social injustice against the dalit Christian in continued by the upper caste and majority religious groups and other fanatic groups. Despite these discriminations at the hands of the upper caste the majority communities and the governments, this community has always accepted the utility of the Indian democratic model.

I. The study analyses the major problems of Christians in India, and shows that Christian community bears a stigma imprinted by history and suffers from what is termed as symbolic violence. The fanatic people do not have a good opinion of the community and consider Christians as a foreign religion in India and perceive it as a colonial impartation. The Christian Church is seen as an establishment which is running a large number of efficient institutions with the help of unlimited funds flowing from western countries. Such perceptions are creating a negative image of community in India.

II. The major problem faced by the community is the right to propagate their religion and undertake social, economic activities in India. It is always alleged by the fanatic groups that the missionaries indulge in conversions in India by providing different type of facilities to the dalit people of the society. Today, conversion has become a burning and serious issue for the nation and have
created new tensions that are seen as assertions of identity by the minority community.

III. From time to time, some fanatics belonging to political parties, such as Congress and Jan Sangh have raised a voice against the minorities inside and outside the Parliament or Legislative Assemblies of various states like Orrisa, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Arunachal Pradesh. These legislative Assemblies have passed bills to prevent conversion by force, fraud or inducement in an attempt to stop the religious activities of the missionaries in these states.

IV. The Sangh Parivar’s sharp reactions against conversion have become controversial. Many priests have been assaulted, harassed and murdered. Even nuns have been raped. The tragic and brutal killing of Australian Missionary in Orissa’s Keonjhar district, became one of the most gruesome episodes in the history of India during the regime of B.J.P. government. Even a corpse was dug up in the night in Gujarat. The coffin was later placed in front of the Methodist pastor’s residence. It is noted that such incidents further plunge the minority community into an identity crisis.

V. Sangh Parivar raised many objections against Christian community in India (See Chapter 4), but it may be noted that Indian Christians trace their origin to St. Thomas, a disciple of Jesus Christ who planted Christianity in the soil of Kerala in A.D. 52. Accordingly, Christianity in India is as old as Christianity in Israel. Many facts and studies (see Chapter 4) disprove all notions of Christianity being an alienation rooted in Western civilization. It is, in fact, an Asian religion like Buddhism and Jainism.

VI. The followers of the Christ are preaching the message among the people but some selfish Christian priests use religion as instrument for collecting money from the Western countries by showing the social work and poverty in India. It is true, that some selfish and independent religious groups are getting a lot of money from the Western countries for individual motives and not for religious and political purposes. It is also a fact that the social service is used as an
VII. The study also analyses the issues relating to Christian community during B.J.P. government and the slogan raised by the Sangh Parivar against Christians. (See Chapter IV) Issues include: (a) One Nation, one culture and one people (b) demand to remove the status of the Christians as a minority community (c) to abolish the National Commission for minoritics, (d) an apology from the Pope for the four centuries old inquisition in Goa (e) National Debate on conversion, (f) to amend the Articles 29 and 30 of the Constitution (g) suffornisation of education and Christianity (h) and the exclusion of Churches from the list of places of worship. All these issues raised by the Sangh Parivar are undemocratic and an aggressive campaign against the minority i.e. Christians in India. This is dangerous to the country’s unity and integrity. The Christians have made
immense contribution towards development of the country and no one can question their patriotism. It is also a deep rooted design to defame Christianity and get a gain in political field.

This study also analysis the constitutional provisions which are enjoyed by minority communities in India. Although a lot of provisions have been given in the Indian Constitution for the protection of minorities but the dalit Christians can not fully enjoy them. For the last fifty seven years, although some genuine efforts have been made to minimise the complications and root out the complexities, nevertheless, a peep into the subject shows that much has yet to be done in dealing with the various aspects of this problem. There are several cases of discrimination and injustice meted out to minorities. In fact, the dalit Christians are a twice discriminated group, firstly as Dalits in general, and secondly on the basis of religion they are denied their fundamental constitutional rights (See Chapter IV).

Article 25 of our Constitution gives full right to all citizens, but the Christians almost always have faced problem with this Fundamental Rights, specially with the last part of the Article to propagate their Christian faith. A number of states of India such as Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Orissa and Arunachal Pradesh have passed acts through their legislatures severely curbing their religious rights (See Chapter IV).

The Christian personal laws which were enacted under the British Rule, mostly reflect the British point of view and need to be amended. Some contents and acts have direct relationship to the English law and the courts. Even there are a lot of references to the Churches of England and Scotland. The Indian Succession Act 1925 also has a number of weak points. This includes the restrictions imposed on the widow’s right to property. All those discrepancies need immediate attention of both the Indian Christians as well as the Indian Government in order to introduce suitable amendments to these Acts.

This study also analyses the participation of Christian community in the freedom struggle and the many sacrifices, suffered by them, along with other communities. Their sacrifices were not nationally recognized and Christian participation in the national struggle is related to both negative and positive aspects. The association of Indian
Christian with western missionaries and religion caste an aspersion on their integrity in India. Their participation is not considered significant in the history of freedom struggle of India.

Some of the observations of this study are related specifically to the Punjab Christians. Christians are facing similar problems in Punjab State as in other states. In Punjab, the dalit Christians are facing discrimination and degradation mostly due to their socio-economic weakness. The economic backwardness of the Christian Community is aggravated by socio-economic disabilities and lack of political influence. Christians have worse conditions and socio-economic status than the Scheduled Castes. A change of religion has not cleaned their scar. Inspite of their conversion to Christianity, they suffer from religious discrimination, degradation and disempowerment in Punjabi society.

Regarding their identity, the Christians in Punjab, are highly fractionated, not only denominationally but also linguistically. Their identities have crystallized either as Catholics or the protestants. They have dual identity which they employ according to the exigency of the situation. When they need an admission or a job in a Christians institutions they claim their Christian identity, but when they look for a government job, they uphold their caste as Scheduled Caste. In Punjab, Christians do not have their own separate identity, traditions and cultural values. The dominant majority, either Sikhs or Hindus, generally powerful also, are attempting to impose their own cultural values. Community is suffering from the stigmatized identity of their having remained untouchables and foreigners.

In Punjab, Christians are in a such a state of impoverishment that always expect something from Churches. But missions and Churches are facing a lot of financial crunch. Churches are not in position to provide a solace or bread for poor Christians. The rural Christian population is mostly dependent on the landlords for their daily needs. Rural indebtedness which is a serious problem of the people in general has a serious impact on the socio-economically backwardness like dalit Christians on limited borrowing for crossing to their repaying capacity is a routine feature of the community. It is a fact that lack of institutional credit facilities affected their social life particularly
in case of labourers and also gave birth to an obnoxious system of forced and bounded labour in Punjab.

Depressed and deorable economic conditions of the community in Punjab points towards a crucial time for the community. Community is facing social, economic educational and cognitive deprivation. All these social conditions deprive the individuals of opportunities and consequently restrict the optimal development of cognitive, emotional and behavioural spheres of their personality. Political education alone will not be sufficient to improve the situation. Along with the task of conscientization of Christians on the matter of political participation, the attempt to improve their socio-economic conditions should also be made simultaneously. Secondly, the Churches need to give particular attention to the rural Christian community instead of concentrating all their energies and resources in the urban areas.

Punjabi Christian Community is also facing a religious problem i.e. right to propagate religion. During the Akali B.J.P. government, many religious conventions were disturbed by the fanatic people at various places in Punjab. The attacks on Christian in Punjab do not leave any doubt that at least some of the fanatic people are preparing a dangerous plan against minority community which is already facing exclusion and consequent disempowerment in the state of Punjab.

It is difficult for the community to make progress in the caste-ridden Punjab politics. Besides, they are considered as a negligible vote bank by the political parties. Basically the community lacks ‘social pull’, which is essential in political field. Secondly, groupism within the local Church politics, disparities between rich and poor Christians and disunity on the basis of denominational affinity to evangelicalism are factors that have been become obstacles in the development of the community. Thirdly, there is no proper organization and political leadership among the Christians. Actually, the socio-economic conditions of the community is responsible for the inability of the community in Punjab to carve out space for themselves in the political arena. The community has also failed to produce any dynamic leader due to backwardness.
An inactive participation in electoral process of the state is an obstacle in the way of participation of Christian community of Punjab. The participation of Sikh in electoral politics in Punjab, the virtual monopoly of Sikhs in electoral politics in Punjab, and their communal feeling, either in the Congress or the Akali Dal, has been a main obstacle in the way of Christian leadership. There is virtual monopoly of the Sikhs in Sikh state over political power and Sikh always replace Sikh. The scope of minorities entirely depends upon the Sikh leaders.

This study shows that the participation of the community is now increasing in all type of elections. The involvement of the Christians in various election bodies, can be useful for the community in the long run. The study also shows that Christians in Punjab have less political will to contest the election. (See Chapter III). Actually the caste ridden society, Sikhs dominance, communal feeling of Hindu voters, their lower socio-economic conditions and backwardness is the main problem for the Christians of the Punjab. Secondly the rich landlords, agriculturists and feudal persons use various means to capture the positions in various elections in their own favour and use the policy of divide and rule to netate the Christian preponderance in certain area. This study shows that the young generation and educated people of the community are found to be more favourable towards participating in politics than the persons belonging to other age groups.

Earlier the Congress party had a stronghold among the religious minorities as well as the weaker sections. But this study shows that the Christian voters are shifting their allegiance from Congress Party to another political parties. (See Chapter III) One reason is that Congress could not fulfill the expectation of the community. They are no longer a captive follower of the Congress. Legislative Assembly Election (2002), highlights a new phase in their political consciousness mobilization and organisation in the Punjab. Akali Dal is gaining the support of Christians in every election. They did a good job especially for the Christian Community (See Table No. 6.4)

BJP’s alliance with Akali Dal has resulted in gaining dalit votes in Punjab with the help of dalit leaders of the community. In the last elections of Lok Sabha, a majority of the dalits and Christians cast their vote in the favour of BJP candidate. There is no
definite pattern in the party performance of community’s who have gradually shifted from the Congress and opted for alternatives whenever they could find them. This change in allegiance is guided by the secular concern to assert themselves in the power structure in order to gain benefits.

From 1962 to 2003, many Christian leaders contested elections as independent candidates but the election results show (See table No. 6.6) that Christians are not influenced by the communal and religious consideration in the exercise of their right to vote. This study shows that the community prefers political parties: either Congress or Akali-BJP alliance than independent Christian candidate. Actually, their votes are controlled by the Zamindar, landlord and rich man in rural area and their socio-economic conditions always compelled them to cast vote in favour of landlords (See table no. 6.7)

Christians in Punjab have no political unity or a proper organisation. The Church leadership always discourages them and even various denominatives are also equally responsible for disunity of the community in the Punjab. Church leadership wants to retain their own hold in political affairs. It is difficult for other non-religious leaders to unite the community without the help of religious dealers. Secondly Christian leaders are themselves responsible. Because they are less educated and they do not have any election strategy, policy programme and ideology. Even Christian leaders have failed to understand the problems of community, and could not chalk out strategy for power politics in Punjab.

Christians in Punjab are also divided into various groups and leaders of each community are attached with various political parties for personal motive. There are many Christians organisations working in Punjab but they are unable to make any impact in the decision making process. They even have different denominations, leg pulling, church politics and lack of trust etc. All political parties are taking benefit of these divisive activities of Christian groups. After the elections, no political parties recognize them. Political parties like Congress party has always played a mischievous role with community. When the Congress parties out of power, then they always talk...
about the welfare of the community when the Congress party is in power, then they never realize the support of the community and instead neglect it.

Although Christians in Punjab have failed to get socio-economic and political justice, but the political parties in Punjab cannot ignore the community for long. This is due to the fact that political parties know the political potential of Christians who are considerable in number and are deciding factor in more than 15 Vidhan Sabha constituencies of Mahja belt and some Lok Sabha Constituencies of the Punjab. The coming new generation of community is very confident and are vocal against any sort of exploitation and oppression at any level. 108

So as far as Punjab State is concerned, no special provision is made by the Punjab Government for Christian community. From 1952 to 1967, there was the provision of nomination in the legislative council. This facility was also enjoyed by the Christian community. The Christian community is also enjoying the benefits of being a backward class but the community is not satisfied and want Schedule Caste facilities in Punjab. (see Chapter III) Panjab Panchayati Raj Act 1994 has been providing loans and subsidy under different schemes to backward classes including Christian community of Punjab. A unique Shagun Scheme was started by the both Congress and Akali Government to capture the dalit Christian votes. This Shagun Scheme is also payable on the remarriage of widows/divorced girls.

In the educational institutions, state government has given scholarship and fee concession facilities to the backward classes including Christian community but they hesitate to provide reservation in case of jobs to community. After independence, Christian community have a feeling that they are being discriminated against religious ground. They are being blatantly ignored and denied state benefits.

Inevitably there are comparisons and it is believed that the Indian Christian community was given a better treatment by the British government. Although they were granted identity in general and special representation provisions for religions minorities were extended through the Government of India Acts of 1919 and 1935, but

there is not much evidence that proper representation was given to Christian community along with other minorities. For safeguarding the interest of the minorities communities, a sub-committee on minorities was formed by the assembly headed by H.C. Mookerjee. After 1947, the partition of the country changed the position and the context of minority problems also changed. Then Advisory Committee on Minorities recommended discontinuation of reservation for religious minorities in order to place complete trust in the people of other faiths and declined to make reservations for a separate electorate and further suggested to include Indian Christians in joint electorate system.

They were even betrayed by their own community leaders like H.C. Mookerjee and Amrit Kaur. They made recommendation to give up all special privileges which are given to Indian Christians. They were criticized that they represented only upper caste Christians and not millions of Christians having the dalit background. Although the other minorities like Muslims and Sikhs followed the example set up the upper caste Christians but the Muslim league took this issue very critically and demanded the separate electorates. At last, the proposal which was moved by the Muslim league was rejected by the Assembly.

After independence, the Constitution (SC) order 1950 and Paragraph 3 clearly violates the principle of equality. Religious freedom enshrined in the Constitution. Paragraph 3 of the Presidential Order is also highly prejudiced since it provides reservation facilities to only those who profess a particular religion and deny them to others, only on the basis of religion. In 1956 and 1990 Parliament amended the presidential order to extend reservation facilities to dalit Sikhs and Buddhist on the basis of religion. So, it is continuing discrimination against the dalit Christians in every respect and also a apartheid policy is being practiced by the government. The various reports and findings of the various commissions have recommended facilities for dalit Christians but Government of India has failed to implement these facilities for dalit Christians. The study analysis shows that this is a serious discrimination on religious grounds and violation of articles 14-15 and 25 of the Indian Constitution which guarantee freedom and justice to all people.
This study has attempted to analyse the important provisions of the Constitution in the context of minorities. Indian constitution recognizes religious minorities and different articles and provisions have been made for all the sections of the society. The drafting committee formulated the various general and specific provisions into many articles and placed them in part-XIV under the title “Special Provision Relating to Minorities”. The general provisions which are enjoyed by both majority and minority equally are called general provisions. Some other important provisions like Lok Adalats are additional arm of the existing judicial institutions. Lok Adalats are the means to take justice to the doorsteps of the vast masses of downtrodden people in the country. Another significant part of the Constitution in this context is part IV, the Directive Principles of the State Policy which is the main plank for the favour of the deprived and under privileged sections of our society.

The greatest safeguard for the religious minorities in a multi-religious society is that the secular state acts as a guardian of the religious minorities and treat all religious equally. Some specific provision for religious minorities have been included in the Indian constitutions - the religious minorities have right to conserve (II) right to freedom of education (III) right to state aid. This study shows that there is a lot of violation of constitutional of provisions and discrimination against the minority community i.e. Christian community of India. The data analysis shows (see Chapter III) that community is being discriminated on the basis of religion. Minorities however cannot confine the benefit of their institutions to the member of their community if they get grant from the government. In that case 50% of seats must be filled on open selection basis and only 50% may be reserved for the community members.

In India, religious minorities have been granted full right to propagate, practise and preach their own religion. These provisions also give an assurance to the minorities that their language, religion and culture will be guarded for a definite development. Article 29(2) also gives full an assurance that there should be no discrimination against any citizen on the ground of religion etc. In the matter of admission to any educational institutions maintained or aided by the state (under Article 30(1) of the Constitution of Indian state) the minorities have also the right to administer educational institutions of
their choice. This right relates to management of the affairs of the institutions, on the other hand, the state may legitimately insist that reasonable restrictions be prescribed to ensure the excellence of the institutions before giving aid or recognition.

In the recent judgment the Supreme Court, reviewed whether under Article 29 and 30, with regard to education there right of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions, whether admission of students to minority educational institutes aided or unaided, can be regulated by the state government or by the university to which the institution is affiliated. The court said that the State government can notify percentages for admission of non-minorities, in respect of seats for the non minorities the admission to such institutions should be normally on the basis of common entrance test held by the state agency. Procedure and method for selection should be fair and merit should not be ignored.

In the same judgment, Supreme Court also give, direction that state cannot regulate the admission of students to un-aided minority educational institutions like school and under-graduate colleges, and the scope of merit based selection was practically nil so long as the same was done transparently. The bench deliberated among other issues, on the meaning of minorities and minority educational institutions and the criteria to determine whether an educational institutions is a minority educational institution (see chapter 6). The study of the constitutional provisions for religious minorities in India reveals that the Indian Constitutions accords not only sufficient protection to minorities but also deals with the subject matter in greater detail and also provides comprehensive machinery for investigation into all matters relating to the working of safeguards.

From time to time, various governments appointed a number of commissions, special officers and committees to consider the case of dalit Christians for reservation in various jobs. All the commissions have recommended that Christian should be considered as backward class. Although the Government of India has provided this benefit and protection to dalits but these are not applicable to the Christians dalits. They have lost their basic human rights and fundamental rights. Several reports and finding of
various commissions have approached the Government of India to extend all kinds of facilities and benefits to dalit Christians as given to scheduled caste Hindus:

**The main findings and observations of the study:**

- The various studies have traced the history of Christians in India and that the Apostle St. Thomas, one of the disciples of Jesus Christ, not only visited South India but also came to Taxila in Northern India during the time King Godophoros. From this, we can conclude that Christianity is as old in India as the Apostolic times.

- It is a fact that Christian faith spread in Punjab virtually through conversion of the down-trodden people of the society by the missionaries. They elevated the neglected classes to high social position and also made them conscious of their dignity. The present Indian Christian community in Punjab is the result of the mass movement and missionary efforts.

- Conversion to Christianity has not brought about a big change in the social status of Christians. Despite their conversion to Christianity, they have suffered a serious discrimination, disempowerment and degradation in Punjab.

- During the British rule, the community enjoyed a lot of privileges and there were also some special representation provisions and reservation for religious minorities. But after 1947, Christian Community is not entitled for these facilities.

- H.C. Mookerjee and Raj Kumari Amirt 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 community.

- The role Indian Christians played in Indian freedom struggle is ignored and there is mention of only individual names of the Indian Christian personalities. Accounts of the nationalist struggle have failed to pinpoint a critical and
progressive role of the Indian Christian community, as such, in the freedom struggle.

- After 1947, Christian community is treated merely as an object instead of as subject. Indian Christians past association with the foreign rulers and their dalit Christian origin caste is continuing to haunt them and is depriving them of equal rights.

- At present, the dalit Christians have the experience of discrimination at two levels, firstly along with dalits in general and secondly, on the basis of religion.

- In Punjab, Mahja, Malwa and Doaba, these three regions represent three geographical areas which are socio-economically, politically and educationally very different from one another.

- In the agrarian society of the Punjab State, the status, conditions prestige and power of any community or caste or groups is determined by the possession of land, the traditional socio-economic set up.

- Dominating cultural and traditions of other caste, religions and groups of majority always impose its own culture and values in the powerless communities. The social identity and social relationship are determined by powerful majority rather than by minority names and values.

- Christians are suffering from stigmatized identity of their having remained untouchables, foreigner and powerless community.

- The new generation and educated Christians of the Punjab do not bother about caste and religion, creed and race. They enjoy and participation in all the functions and festivals and have crossed the limitations and bar of the caste system of the society.

- In an education field, the Christians in the Doaba region are at the top, the Malwa area come next and the Mahja occupied the lowest level. The overall picture of the education level of Christians in the rural area is not better, but only slightly better than the previous years. (Table No. 3.2 and 3.3).
• In Punjab, it is also fact that the percent of dependency of the community on agriculture based economy of the community is also decreasing every year. This is due to economic mobility of the people belonging to Christian community. Actually, the arrival of migrant labour from other states provide an easy alternative to landowners. As a result, Christians and other dalits in three regions have been able to distance themselves from employment in agriculture and consequently from the land owning farmers.

• Indian Christians have feelings that they are being discriminated on grounds of religion. A number of states have passed acts through their legislature thereby severally curbing the fundamental rights and the basic rights of the religious minorities.

• The various problems like communal riots, terrorism and violence in the past has also affected the socio-economic conditions of the community in the Punjab.

• Christians are not bound or influenced by the communal and religious considerations in exercise of their right to votes.

• Christians constitution order 1950 and Paragraph 3 of the Presidential order was highly communalistic. It provided reservation facilities to only those who professed a particular religion and denied them others only on the basis of religion.

• The Christians feel that they are being ignored and denied state benefits by the various governments in Punjab. Neither the Congress (I) nor the Akali-B.J.P. alliance paid any special attention towards this neglected community. Both failed to take keen interest in implementing any special welfare scheme.

• It is a fact, that the economic backwardness of the dalit Christians of Punjab is aggravated by social disabilities and lack of political influence.

• In Punjab, socio-economic backwardness does not seem to have directly affected the general political participation. But this has greatly affected the entry of Christians into active political involvement.
The urban Christians of Mahja, Malwa and Doaba are better off than rural Christians of Punjab. Malwa and Doaba (See Table No. 2.2) both regions have economically sound position in comparison to Mahja region.

The socio-economic hierarchy of the landlords and Jat Sikhs in the political institutions like Vidhan Sabha, Lok Sabha, Village Panchayat, Cooperations, Boards and Co-operative Societies is the principle means through which the landlords deprive the dalits of the fruits of their labor.

It is also noted that the backwardness of a community is neither a social stigma nor a handicap. It is the politicians’ chartered vehicle to power.

It is new trend that the dalits and uneducated voters participation is comparatively better than the educated class in Punjab.

The socio-economic and political hierarchy of landlords and richmen do not allow them to contest the elections. An educated Christians voters are not traditionally attached with congress. They are shifting towards another political parties in the Punjab (Table 5.2) to get Political motive.

It is also fact that majority of Christians always in the favour of Secular Political Party i.e. Congress and on the another side also like congress leadership in the state as well as centre level (Table No. 5.7 and 5.8 and 5.9)

Economic backwardness and lower social background of the Punjabi Christians give them little or no scope in the political arena which is a highly caste ridden and dominate society in Punjab. Political leadership and active involvement in Political process seem to be controlled by economically stronger communities.

Finally, some suggestions given below may be worth considering in order to develop socio-economic conditions and better participation in politics by Christian Community of Punjab.

I. It is not only due to minority status but due to minority complex, that the Christians leaders hesitate to jump into Punjab Politics. In act the minority complex does not have much weight if minority leader is able and strong and can lead the
people. Community leaders should adopt a policy of cohesion to get something in politics. On the other hand, Churches and Missions should give financial help to develop leadership among the Christians in Punjab. For political purpose, it is necessary for the Christian leaders to take support of dalits groups, communities, and all denominations because no sincere attempt seems to have been made to bring coordination to the whole community in Punjab. Christians should be encouraged to become members of political parties and to contest in elections wherever possible in village panchayats or municipal or other election. The Church and Christians leaders should shoulder the responsibility and make sincere efforts to organize Christian community on one platform for political purpose.

II. The economic picture of the dalit Christians of Punjab, has emerged very low, (see Chapter III) this study may serve as the guidelines in awareness building for any agency or the Church or government when they formulate their programmes for their development. It is very necessary to develop new policies, methods, curricula and scientific techniques for learning and skill developing. This is important in order to bring a change in their situation in near future. This is most important aspect of economy for dalit and poor Christians in the acquisition of skill and technical know-how especially when one does not own the land.

III. This study shows the Christian Community in the urban area of Punjab to be almost literate, although considerable amount of illiteracy is found in broader and rural area of district Gurdaspur. Christian organizations agencies and missions should take special responsibility to provide financial help and provide free education to poor Christians of the society in Punjab for their development. The Church should give top priority to start schools and vocational technical schools in the rural area for their development.

IV. The Churches and Missions must take effective education and economic measures in the rural areas to enable the economic empowerment of the Christian Dalits. There may be a co-relation between education and social mobility. There are numerous educational institutions run by missionaries and they should take interest
and care for education of the Dalit Christians. This education facility made available to the dalits might have its impact on the life of the these people.

V. While the Christian Dalits suffer under the additional problem of the discriminations of the state against their community, their problem in general is an integral part of the overall Dalit problem in this country. Therefore in the best interest of their struggle for justice, they should join forces without any reservation with all other Dalit liberation and secular movements. Further it is of vital importance that the Church encourages its members to join such progressive movements and help to promote a socio-political ferment through effective social and political education programming.

The State must take following steps for the protection and welfare of minorities:-

- State should stop forces which are creating problems for minority. If those who complain of misuse of the right to religion are proved right, the instruments of force and fraud must be punished according to the law of the land.

- A propaganda against minorities by raising different issues and interference with their fundamental rights is a deep rooted design to defame the minority i.e Christianity. This is dangerous for the country’s unity and integrity.

- Government of India should provide more powers to the National Commission for minorities for their protection.

- Government of India must establish State commission for minorities at state level.

- The conversion debate should be settled in the light of the tolerant Indian jurisprudence. The plurality and diversity of Indian can be maintained only by showing tolerance to all religions.

- The Christian community in India is under fear due to atrocities. Fear will not lead any where. Christians have to get rid of this fear and plan out strategies to make issue a secular mainstream one.
• The Government of Punjab must take effective education and measures in the rural areas to enable the economic empowerment of the Christians.
• Government should pay special attention for the upliftment of the community and their socio-economic status and also provide at least two percent reservations in Government jobs for the welfare of the community on the pattern of Government of Kerala (See Appendix XI)
• Finally, government should provide equal opportunity in all spheres for debts and take steps to ensure adequate representations from this community.

In a nutshell, the Christians in India as well as in Punjab, suffer from the same socio-economic and political problems of discrimination against their community. Their problems in general, are an integral part of the overall dalit problems in India. This study concludes that the most important grievance of religious minorities relate to the operation of state agencies and ineffective right to propagate their religion and social activities. Besides the apathy of administration, violation of minorities rights, paragraph 3 of the Presidential order of 1950, and Mandal Commission report has created helpless and frustrating situation for the community. Atrocities of the minorities on the one hand and communal conflicts and tension of the other hand (See Chapter IV) have resulted in a lot of violation of minority rights. States should cooperate in promoting and developing the respect for the rights of minorities, provide proper political representation and take appropriate measures so that persons belonging to minorities may participate fully in the economic progress and development of the country. There is need to struggle against both, fanaticism of higher castes in the state as also discrimination experienced within the Christian community along caste divisions. There is also need to stress on campaigning for democratic and secular values and building platform where all the exploited dalits and minorities can come together for the defence of their Constitutional rights. In general, the recognition of pluralism and in particular, the institutionalization of minority rights will go a long way in the process of nation building.

In Punjab, the Christian community is in minority and is economically poor, political powerless, socially depressed and needy in general. A change of religion has
not cleaned their scar and not even brought big change in their life. They have the feeling that the few upper caste Christian leaders betrayed the million Christians having dalit background. Politically, they are considered as negligible vote bank by the political parties like Congress or Akali Dal. Both political parties are playing politics with community by capturing votes through various foul means. Since 1952, Christian voters were traditionally attached with Congress Party. But today, young generation and educated Christians are fed up with Congress party and are gradually shifting their allegiance from the Congress (see Chapter No. III) and opting for alternative behaviour. This change in allegiance is moral and guided by secular concern to assert their role in the power structure in order to avoid political persecution and gain socio-economic benefits. They have full political participation rights but their socio-economic backwardness does not allow for an active participation. The community’s limited participation in electoral and legislative politics at different levels of political system has however increased their bargaining power in recent times. A more complete participation can change the political scenario of Punjab, especially in Majha region, if they organize themselves politically.

The young generation of the community is found actively involved in various elections in Punjab. Their involvement can be useful for the community in the long run and also can change the minority politics. They have the ability to mould themselves along with other communities and according to fast-changing circumstances. Only poor, needy, bounded, oppressed and dalit Christians are controlled through various means for political motive by the landlords or political parties, because they do not know policy programme, ideology and manifesto of political parties. In this regard, there is a need to educate the community and provide political awareness about their political rights. They also need to understand the political structure, hierarchy and political strategy and attitude of political parties and politics of landlords and higher castes in Punjab in particular.

This study also concludes that caste and religion, are both used as political weapons by higher castes during the election time. But Dalit Christians have stigmatized identity and their past association with foreign rulers and their dalit
Christian origin caste is continuing to haunt them. It is a compulsion of the community that they give more importance to economic needs rather than political power. It is a fact that the higher castes and fanatic people do not favour dalits Christians candidates either from Congress party or Akali Dal. The Sikhs who are in a minority in Indian politics happen to be a majority in the state of Punjab. It is interesting to note that while interacting with minorities in Punjab (especially the Christian Community in this case) the Sikhs share the characteristics of a majority. In Punjab, there is virtual monopoly of the Sikhs in Sikh State over political power. They always replace Sikh to Sikh either from Congress or Akali Dal. The scope of Christian Community in politics entirely depend upon the Sikh leaders.

An inactive participation in electoral process of the State has led to the exclusion of the community and this needs to be corrected by their inclusion, not as ‘dependent minority’ or as clients of the political parties, but as parties in the power share of the state. This study observed many factors including poor socio-economic conditions, the lack of cohesion, lack of dynamic Christian leadership and religious orientations that have become obstacles in the way of political participation of the community in Punjab. On the other hand, the participation of Sikhs in electoral politics in Punjab and their virtual monopoly in polity along with their communal alignments, whether in the Congress or the Akali Dal, has led to the phenomena of ‘shrinking space’ and consequently become a main obstacle in the pursuits of active politics by the Christian community of Punjab. The dream of egalitarianism may yet succeed when the deepening democracy makes the disempowered Christian minority ‘inclusive’ in the larger context of India and more particularly in the context of the state of Punjab.