CHAPTER – I

INTRODUCTION : PROBLEM AND METHODOLOGY

There is no state in the world today without some category of minority. Any reference to minority presupposes a majority. Although existence of minority is a universal phenomenon yet the nature of minority problem is not always the same everywhere. It is different in form and intensity in various parts of the world at different times and has taxed the brains of statesmen, thinkers, scholars and the social scientists. Although western discourses have been preoccupied with dominant minority relations, politics in plural India are dominated by problems relating to ‘exclusion’ of minority from the mainstream politics.

After the World War II, the world’s minorities, locked within the borders of states, have increased rather than decreased. They are facing various types of problems (which include prejudice, discrimination and exclusion of minorities) in different parts of the world. In South Asia, the Tamil speaking minority in Sri Lanka, Bahuns and Chetaris in Nepal, Chakmas and the Urdu-speaking minorities in Bangladesh, the Ahmediyas, the Ismailis and Zikris among many others are discriminated against in Pakistan. The Hindus and the Christians are discriminated on the religious grounds in Bangladesh. Some examples in other parts of the world include the Indians of Uganda, the Kurds of Iraq, the Huk and Mohammedan tribes of the Philippines, the Nubiana of Southern Sudan, the Baltic Nations and to a lesser extent the Ukranians, the Croats of Yugoslavia, the French Canadians and the
Basque of North Western Spain have all been unsuccessful in asserting their minority rights.¹

Eduardo Alberto has observed that in the African states, like Nigeria and Sudan, most of the minorities are facing tremendous problems arising from a variety of linguistic and ethnic groups of the population coexisting inside the border of most of the modern African States of the continent. Some of the smaller states of the Gulf of Guinea, such as Ghana, where about hundred ethnic groups exist, or in Togo with thirty ethnic groups, the minority problem is even more complex if we take into account the exiguity of the land.²

In the Arab world, there are many countries wherein lacs of Christians and Hindus are residing and facing problems relating to citizenship and political rights. They are not even allowed to celebrate own any festivals. They are not allowed to construct any temple or Church. The Islamic system does not fit in the changing scenario of the modern world where religion is accepted as a private matter.

In the West, religion has been recognized no doubt but their country comes first and the religion afterwards. The Christians are in majority in countries like America, England and France, and the people of different religious faiths are also residing in those countries. Religion has no role in framing laws and only national interest in taken into account. But there exist eighteen percent Negroes in America, who have not yet been granted minority status. The Sikh community also had some difficulty. Britain, Canada; and the other western countries have acceded to the demand of the Sikhs that they


should be allowed to possess Kripaun, Kada and Kesh. A country like France is framing some laws and imposing some restrictions on wearing turban.\(^3\)

The Soviet State brought into existence minority nations by redrawing boundaries and promoting a particular language within it. It invested the new nationalities with a script and a territory and recognized them as ‘autonomous republics’. In other words, the state brought together ethnicities and encased them as national minorities. While it recognized these newly created minorities and made elaborate arrangements for recognized minorities, their privileges were rarely extended to other minorities. So unrecognized minorities remained within the minority nation and recognized minorities outside the boundaries of their republic.\(^4\)

Although Soviet Russia made the most explicit constitutional arrangements for recognizing minorities but religious minorities like Christians are facing a religious problems in the presence of Orthodox. They are harassed and persecuted. Even Buddhists and Muslims and other religions, each are painfully harassed by the Russian Orthodox.

Although the Chinese always had massive majority known as the Han people, some of the small groups like Huizu, Meng Zu Man Zu Wei-Wu-er, Dai, Miao, Zhuang, Jingpo and some are scattered all over China. They are not in a position to seek independent statehood for themselves. Then there are the Tibetans who are concentrated in Tibet, Qinghai and the XiKang region of Sichuan. They are the followers of the Dalai Lama who has been seeking either total autonomy for the Tibetan inhabited areas or total independence from the Chinese central government.

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Several countries have tried to mitigate the problems that arise due to
the concepts of majority and minority by way of encouraging the sense of
nationality among the people. Such countries, especially Japan, are of the view
that this conflict will continue till such division exists. It is pertinent that
people attach so much importance to their lands and their sense of nationality
that communal sentiment is relegated to the secondary position and people
consider themselves as the members of one nation and pay their contribution
to run the government smoothly with peace and order. On the basis of
language Ninty-nine percent are Japanese-speaking and the Koreans speaking
persons constitute only half a percent in Japan. The Koreans who are in
minority find it difficult to adjust with the Japanese. Japanese also feel that
other minorities may create problems. This is the reason that they are afraid
of ten lac Muslims residing in Japan. The Japanese government is always
apprehensive about the Muslim Minorities.5

In America, the aboriginals are never defined under the term minority.
They are called native Americans and they are considered to be a part and
parcel of the country. The government of Switzerland also does not award
minority status to the different groups and thus the ambition of minority
groups is put under control. There are German, Italian and French speaking
people in Switzerland. They are also divided in Catholic and Protestant groups
in the name of religion. The people from the nearby countries came and settle
in this country for various reasons. Although they are minorities in character
yet they like to be known as Swiss, which is of utmost importance to them.

So for as India’s case is concerned, trajectory reveals that India has
almost always had a composite population. The Indian society lacks
homogeneity in so far as there exist numerous religious, cultural and linguistic
groups. There are followers of Hinduism, Islam and Christian faith. There are

5 Hussain, Muzaffar, op.cit., . 35.For dominant-minority discourse in USA see Marden,
Meyer, op.cit., p. 4-15.
also Paris and Sikhs. Each major religion comprises within itself a number of religious denominations and sects. The Constitution of free India has given recognition to a number of languages in the Eight Schedule and there are five religious groups which have been given the official status of National Minorities namely the Muslims, Christians, Sikhs Buddhists and Parsees. The framers of the Constitution bestowed considerable thought and attention upon the minority problem in all its facets and provided constitutional safeguards. Yet the issue has evaded a solution till today. Consequently, the progress of minorities, in India is beset with problems including those of prejudice and discrimination.

Event he dominant Muslim community has some grievances. It is perceived by many that they lag behind in educational progress because of economic hardship and discrimination against them in education field. No special efforts have been made to fulfil the needs of Muslims which belong to the lower strata of society. The grievances of the Sikhs in India are largely political with subdued economic overtones. The grievances of all religious minorities seem to be related to the operation of state agencies.

This study is confined to the problems of Indian Christians and more particularly to the Christian minority in Punjab. Any reference to minority presupposes the existence of majority and their relations with each other. Four central issues of concern — security, economy, human rights and environment — have a bearing on people irrespective the fact whether they belong to majority or a minority. Questions about majority-minority problems that arise are:

- What status has the polity granted to its minorities.
- What are the problems faced by minority especially in the context of inclusion and exclusion in state building in post-colonial India.
- How far they are able to assert themselves.
- What is the role and extent of their participation in politics and
socio-economic development.

- What is the extent of prejudice and discrimination faced by them
- How far are they able to preserve their district social and cultural life
- How far, if at all, they have been able to assimilate in the mainstream.

The responses of people are bound to be unequal, depending on their location i.e. whether they are located in majority or in a minority. In order to cull out the experience of a minority, in this case Christian minority of Punjab, a questionnaire was prepared and a cross-section of Christian population residing in sub-areas of Punjab was approached for their responses. These responses became the basis of this study and finally are instrumental in reaching the findings at the end.

Some points emerge from the above discussion. Firstly the minority problem is not peculiar to India, for it is found in almost every country in the world. But, the magnitude of the problem is greater in India than in other countries. This is because India is a heterogenous society in more than one sense. And most parts of the world, majority – minority relations in India are soured by the majority insisting on the “otherness” of the minority and their own ‘superiority’. Secondly, fundamentalism, discrimination, cultural pluralism, communalism, desegregation, apartheid policy and revivalism have become familiar terms everywhere in world. Such type of situation has created puzzling phenomena among minority and majority groups. Consequently, It is difficult to study inter-group relations and even more difficult to define the concept of minority.

At present, the minority question especially in the context of Christians has attracted little attention of scholars. Scholars have tried to explain minority problems, but no conclusive yardstick to define the term minority has yet emerged. There are many definitions of the primary term used in the study of inter-group relations.
The Concept of Minority:

Since the advent of democracy, the problem of minorities has acquired a political dimension and has played a significant role in national and international affairs. In the opinion of Prof. H. Kabir, "There can be no question of minorities except in a democracy. Unless there is democracy the problem does not arise in that form at all." It is only democracy that recognizes different minorities and hopes to provide them with equal and fair treatment. On the other hand, minorities have no place in a totalitarian regime, and minorities cannot keep their separate identities therein. They have to submerge themselves in the state itself. So the problem of minorities as such is essentially a problem of democracy.

The term "minority" is a product of democracy as there can be no minority except in a democracy. The development of democracy, based on majority rule, has given birth to a new terminology called dominated groups. They are referred to as minorities or, it can be said, that group which makes a population more heterogeneous. The kind of heterogeneity will, of course, depend upon national, cultural religious and racial ideologies or in other words on the characteristics of the majority, those with the greatest power and highest status.

The criteria used to define, identify and distinguish minorities may vary from case to case, but generally they have to do with language, religion, territory, history, social and political organization, shared myths and feeling of identity and belonging that Anderson calls 'imagined community'.

Minorities may come into existence either as a result of conquest and subjugation or breakup of a multi-national empire or process of a malgamation or integration of ethnic groups or immigration or political, social and economic

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6 Wadhwa, Kamlesh Kumar (1975) Minority Safeguards in India, Thomas Press (India) Ltd., Faridabad. p. 1
inequalities or combination of these various factors. In India minority environment is a combination of these various factors. Minority groups are not eternal they are dynamic social units that may emerge, metamorphose and dissolve over a period of time according to changing historical circumstances.8

Before tracing the history of minority problem in democracy, it would be necessary to examine the evolution and the meaning of the term “minority”. It is said that the term minority as applied in modern political terminology is restricted to distinct racial or national groups in minority of numerical strength within a sovereign state.9

Grammatically speaking, the term ‘minority’ is compound of the Latin word ‘minor’ and the suffix ‘ity’ meaning inter-alia, ‘the smaller in number of the two aggregates that together constitute a whole’.10 According to Webster dictionary it means, “a group characterised by a sense of separate identity and awareness of status apart from a usually larger group of which it forms or is held to form a part.11 According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica12 ‘Minority is a culturally, ethnically or racially distinct group living within a larger society. The meaning and definitions just referred to contain a common criterion, namely, statistical criterion, but sociologist and theorists go further than confining their definition of minority to merely numerical ratio criteria.

When the term ‘minority’ first appeared in the English language (1533) it described either a condition of fact of being smaller, inferior, or subordinate.

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11 Massey, I.P. (1968) op.cit., pp. 16-17 and also see Webster, Third New International dictionary, Vol. 15, p. 542.
Later in 1547 this term was used with reference to minors so far as their legal status was concerned. In 1736 the term was used in numerical sense to describe the relationship between larger and smaller groups/values. In 1788 the term was defined in political sense to denote the number of votes cast for a political party. Thus in its earlier usage the term was used both in qualitative and quantitative sense. At present time, the concept of minority can be explained in two alternative ways: one, such alternative may be from the point of view of democracy and the other may be from the point of view of preferences. When all the preferences, whether they concern the individual or collective are aggregated and counted a majority and minority emerges. From the point of view of nationalism, it is ascriptive feature of groups in a society which determine majority or minority. In this framework, distinction between majority and minority is based not on terms of preferences but in terms of special identity constituting features on which groups of individual are based.

There are numerous criteria used in defining and classifying minorities. According to Anthropologists after family, minorities act as a natural social groupings in an ancient phenomena. Neera Chandhoke define a workable definition. A minority is a group that is numerically smaller in relation to the rest of the population, it is non-dominant to the extent that its values are either inadequately or not represented in the public sphere or in the constitution of social norms, it has characteristics which differ from the majority group and more importantly, it wishes to preserve these characteristics.

**SOCILOGICAL ASPECT**: Sociologists define the term ‘minority’ on the

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13 Massey, I. P. *op. cit.* p. 16.
14 Ibid., pp. 18-19.
basis of certain characteristics which are commonly possessed by members constituting it. In this sense, the term signifies such groups of people that are united by certain common features and which feel that they belong to one common unit. Such groups may be held together by ties of common descent, physical characteristics, traditions, customs, language or religious faith or a combination of these.\textsuperscript{16}

This shows that there is a sense of akinness, a sense of community or unity prevalent in the group or groups that distinguish them from the majority of the inhabitants of the area where such minorities function. It is this sense of akinness within the group coupled with the consciousness of a difference with the majority which may serve as the basis for various political or other claims. J.A. Laponce defines a minority as a group of people, who, because of a common racial, linguistic, religious or national heritage which singles them out from the politically, ‘dominant’ group, fear that they may either be prevented from integrating themselves into the national community of their choice or be obliged to do so at the expense of their identity.\textsuperscript{17} Further he expresses that a minority group is \textit{generally} but not always politically less influential than other sections of the population, but its political position is only one factor in distinguishing it as a minority from other types of grouping that may occupy subordinate positions\textsuperscript{18}. What makes a minority group in the eyes of members of a society are a number of other distinctive features: race, culture, language, religion, or economic function.\textsuperscript{19}

It is much more important to understand the nature and genesis of the relationship between the dominant group and minority than it is to know the

\textsuperscript{17} Laponce, J.A. (1960) \textit{The Protection of Minorities}, University of California, Berkeley, p. 6. and Manju Sabhash, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 22.
\textsuperscript{18} Sabhash, Manju \textit{op.cit.}, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 1-2.
yardstick by the possession of which people are identified as a member of either. Louis Wirth is among those sociologists who regard minority as a group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment and who, therefore, regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination. Further, minority status carries with it an exclusion from full participation in the life of the society.20

Louis Wirth and J.A. Laponce both have similar views. Professor Louis Wirth clearly defined the two aspects of minorities thus:21

(1) The minority group is marked out from the others in the society by virtue of its specific racial or cultural characteristics. Such characteristics are of a permanent nature so that one’s membership in a minority group is involuntary and, by and large, a person is born into such a group.

(2) Second important element of a minority is derived from its subordinate relationship to some other dominant groups. The dominant group, however, need not necessarily be the larger one, numerically, although in a democratic society in which numbers count in the acquisition of power, the numerically larger group may also become the dominant group. The actual minority dominant relationships are determined by variables of socio-economic and political power which are unequally distributed between the two types of groups.

A similar viewpoint has been accepted by A.M.Rose and C.B. Rose. According to them, “One of the major determination of a minority group is


that its members considers themselves to be a minority group. This feeling involves one or both of the following attitudes. Firstly, the members feel that they are the objects of prejudice and discrimination and that they need to combine in order to protect themselves and to feel safe and comfortable. Secondly, the members feel that they have inherited cultural values, the expression of which requires that they continue to associate with each other.22

After dealing with the various aspects of the term ‘minority’, it is now important to understand the concept from the quantitative angle also. The term minority particularly refers to numbers, and that too, not so much, in aggregate terms as in terms of proportion. It is too objectively a statistical concept and undimensional in its connotation when one speaks of a political minority or a minority party in a democracy, one implies a prospect of its transformation into a majority. But when one speaks of a social, ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious minority in a state, then, one cannot imply hopefully any such prospects of a minority becoming a majority or vice-versa.23

Although Lapone, Wirth and Rose consider minority as one that is excluded from full participation in the life of society. R.A. Schermerhorn views minority from a different angle. According to him,24 “Minorities are sub-groups within a culture which are distinguished from the dominant group by reason of differences in physiognomy, language, customs or cultural patterns (including any combination of these factors). Such sub-groups are regarded as inherently different and not belonging to the dominant group: for this reason they are consciously or unconsciously excluded from full participation in the life of the culture.

24 Pandey, Bhrigu Nath, op.cit., p. 45.
A perusal of the above definitions shows that in spite of a difference of opinion among scholars, one thing seems to be now settled, that in the social sciences the term is not defined as a statistical concept of “less than 50%” instead the test of “dominant” and “dominated” groups to describe majority and ‘minority’ respectively is adopted. So much stress is made on the concept of dominant and ‘dominated’ that one may even go to the extent of saying that there can be no minority, even if there are distinguishing characteristics in terms of race, religion etc. unless there is an accompanying attitude of “dominance” and “subservience” consciously accepted or tacitly assumed.  

UNITED NATION’S CRITERION

The minority question has attracted little attention from political scientists though it has been a contributing factor to World War I and other major wars in the last twentieth century. American as well as European dictionaries have defined minority only in its legal, arithmetical and political meaning. In the mid-twenties the Encyclopaedia Britannica had no article on minorities. They either mentioned by name, the minority they intended to protect or simply referred to inhabitants of a country who differ from the majority of the population in race, language and religion.

The problem of determining and defining the term was not easily resolved even by the United Nations, and it gave an agreed definition only in 1950. The U.N. Human Rights Commission appointed a special sub-committee on the protection of minority rights in 1946. This sub committee adopted the following definition of minority in its resolution of January 8, 1950.

“The term minority includes only those non-dominant groups in a population which possess wish to preserve their ethnic, religious or linguistic

25 Ibid., p. 45.
tradition or characteristics markedly different from those of the rest of the population. Such minorities should properly include a number of persons sufficient by themselves to develop such characteristics and the members of such minorities must be loyal to the state of which they are nationals."

Article 27 of the U.N. Covenant on Civil and Political Rights guarantees rights for persons belonging to ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. Unfortunately the covenant does not provide a definition for a 'Minority' as a group or a collective. International Court of Justice tried to establish that a minority is a group of persons living in a given country or locality having a race, religion, language and traditions of their own and united by this traditions of race, religion, language and a sentiment of solidarity, with a view to preserving their traditions, maintaining their from of workship, ensuring the instructions and up bringing their children in accordance with the spirit and tradition of thin race and rendering mutual assistance to each other".27

This judgment of The International Court of Justice became the starting point for the definition of a minority put forwarded by Prof. Francesco capotorti in his report on protection of minorities in 1977. He established certain subjective and objective criteria for determination of a minority.28

The objective level a minority is not only numerically inferior to the rest of the population of the state it must also be in a non-dominant positive. While the members of a minority are nationals of the state of residence, they possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the

28 Ibid., pp. IX –X.
rest of the population.29

The subjective criteria, is defined as a will on the part of the members of the groups in question to preserve their own characteristics, in reserving, the will generally emerges from the fact that a minority group has kept its distinctive identity over a period of time. Once the existence of a group or particular community having its own characteristics is certain solidarity between the members of the group, and consequently a common will on their part to contribute to the preservation of their distinctive identity becomes strong.

On the basis of above criterions, it may be observed that the subjective factor is implicit in the basic objective elements or events in the behaviour of the members of the groups. In precise context of Article 27 of the covenant the terms minority may be taken to refer to: 30

(1) A group numerically less to the rest of the population of a state;
(2) In a non-dominant position;
(3) Whose members being nationals of the State-Possesses ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population; and
(4) These members show a sense of solidarity towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language.

Many agencies, of the UNO have tried to define the word “minority”. Without much success the UN General Assembly also formulated the principles of the Right of Self-determination without defining the term minority. UNESCO used the term ‘national minority’ and the Convention on Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide uses the term national, ethnic, racial or religion groups.

It may be observed that no definition is comprehensive enough to cover

30 Ibid., pp. X & XI and also see Chandhoke, Neera op.cit., p. 278-79.
all and varied situations. This illustrates the difficulty experienced in assigning limits to the concept of minority. Even Article 27 of the UN Covenant does not provide sufficient protection to minorities. In fact, Article 27 is related to the individual components of a minority and not collective rights.

In 1985, the UN sub-commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities was set up under the Human Rights Commission which drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The sub commission stated that “minorities included only those non-dominant groups in a population which possess and wish to preserving stable ethnic, religious or linguistic traditions or characteristics markedly different from those of the rest of the population.\textsuperscript{31}

Clearly, no definition of minority is comprehensive enough to cover all and varied situations. Thus, it is difficult to explain the concept of “minority”. The purpose to define the minority is not to evaluate the relative merits and each definition has its relevance A minority in the Indian situation may be better defined as any section of citizens, being small in number in definite area, in respect of religion, language, tribe or any other group, seeking equal or preferential treatment either to maintain its identity or to be assimilated with the majority.\textsuperscript{32} For the purpose of this study, a minority must have the following requisites:

1. in a multi-religious and multi-linguistic Indian Society, a group of people claiming to be a minority must have faith in the same religion or;

2. numerically the group should not be in any case more than fifty per cent of the total population of the state.

\textsuperscript{31} Pandey, B.N. \textit{op. cit.}, p. 46.  
\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Ibid.}, p.47.
Problem of Defining Minorities in India

The Constitution of India uses the term ‘minority/minorities in four of its Articles namely, Articles 29(1), 30, 350A and 350B. But it neither defines the term minority or minorities nor delineates criteria for determining minority. In order to bring a case under Articles 29 and 30 of the Constitution, a community has first to establish its character as linguistic, scriptural, cultural or religious minority. Thus, there is no precise definition of or criteria for determining minority in the constitution.

In absence of any constitutional guidelines, we are left only with judicial interpretation of minority. On the meaning of the word minority the Supreme Court felt that though it was easy to say that minority community means a community which is numerically less than 50 per cent, it left part of the question unanswered namely 50 per cent of the population of a state or of the Union.

The Government of Kerala contested that the minority must numerically be a minority in the particular region in which the educational institution situated in order to claim the fundamental rights of the minorities. DAV College, Jalandhar v/s State of Punjab provided an occasion for the Supreme Court, if the same was not available to it in the Kerala reference for expressing the opinion on the meaning of ‘minority’. The Court took a view of the state of Punjab for determination of the issue whether Arya Samajists were a minority. The Court held that Hindus in Punjab constitute a religious minority. Therefore, Arya Samajists in Punjab also constitute a religious minority having their own distinct script. The Supreme Court seems to have settled the position saying that the term minority must be determined in

relation to the particular legislation which is sought to be impugned. Consequently, if it is state law then the minorities will be determined in relation to the population of the state.35

The above view was further confirmed in DAV College Bathinda versus State of Punjab.36 Referring to the decision in the earlier case, Jagmohan Reddy J. said. “We had held that what constitutes a linguistic or religious minority be judged in relation to the state in as much as the impugned Act is a state Act and not in relation to the whole of India.”

The Supreme Court made no attempt to provide a general test for ascertaining a minority and it had to fall back upon its earlier view to merely hold that if the law is enacted by the state, minorities have to be determined with reference to the entire population of that state. However, if the rejection of the criterion suggested by the State of Kerala preceded a judicial scrutiny and was supported by the court’s own reasons, the new criterion advocated in the above cases, met with summary rejection without being examined on merit.37

Following the above decision, the Kerala High Court38 which was called upon to determine whether Christians were a minority in the state of Kerala held, “The word minority’ is not defined in the Constitution; and in the absence of any special definition we must hold that fifty per cent of the population of the state is entitled to the fundamental right guaranteed by the Article.” The reference was to Article 30(1). The Court found that as the Christians at the 1961 census amounted any to 21.22 per cent of the total population of the state of Kerala they were a minority within the term of

35 Subhash Manju, op.cit., and also see Gangwal Sunita, op.cit., p. 34.
36 Gangwal Sunita. op.cit., p. 35.
37 Ibid., p. 35.
38 Ibid., p. 35.
The formulation as given by the Supreme Court of India is rather simple and arithmetical. There are certain difficulties with the explanation. One possibility is that the population in a state may be so heterogeneous that no single community may constitute more than fifty per cent of the state population. Thus all groups may claim the title of minority community. The second problem about this definition is that there right to be certain communities which are in majority in case of states but in minority in the case of the Union. Thus such communities shall be having double status of being in majority at one and the same time and in minority in different contexts. Myron Weiner observed that in the Indian context, minority and majority states is a matter of self ascription. What is majority from one perspective is a minority from another. For example. Muslims, Sikhs and Christians are more than fifty per cent in Jammu and Kashmir Punjab and Nagaland respectively but in minority in all India context.

In the nutshell, the minority in India is a relative term. It is primarily a political and not merely a numerical concept. This fact finds further confirmation in the debates of the Constituent Assembly of India. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, explained this term in the Assembly in this way:

The word is used not merely to indicate the minority in the technical sense of the word, it is also used to cover minorities which are not minorities in the technical sense, but which are, none the less, minorities in the cultural and linguistic sense.

39 Similarly the Patna High Court accepted the contention that persons of Rajasthani origin, with Rajasthani as their language and Mahajani as their script, residing in the state of Bihar were a minority based of language. Pannalal V/s Magadh University, AIR 1976 Pat. 83. also K.O.Verky v/s State of Kerala AIR, 1969, Ker. 191 and also see Gangwal Sunita op. cit., p. 35.
41 Wadhwa, Kamlesh Kumar. op. cit., p. 7.
Since the meaning of the term minority was to be taken in a particular sense so far as the Constitution of India was concerned, that after the word, ‘any’ the word ‘minority’ be substituted in place of the words “Section of citizens” was negatived. When the Article 23 of the Draft Constitution was under discussion. It later on took the final shape of Articles 29 and 30 and both articles in the entire Constitution of India, explicitly stand guarantee to the protection of the interests of the minorities in India. Article 29 states “Any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof of having a distinct language, script or culture of its own, shall have the right to conserve the same” and second Article 30(1) acknowledged the right of ‘minorities’ based on religion or language to establish and administer educational institution of their choice. It is clear from the language of the above two articles that three categories of minorities has been recognized under the constitution, viz. minorities based on culture, language, and religion.

(1) **MINORITIES BASED ON CULTURE:**

Difference on the grounds of language or religion are understandable, but it is difficult to define the word culture. Prof. K.T. Shah observed in the Constituent Assembly Speaking of culture “I think that is not a single item either of area, language or script. It is a vast ocean, including all the entirety of the heritage the past of any community in the material as well as spiritual domain. Whether we think of the arts, the learning, the sciences, the religion or philosophy, culture includes them all, and much ease besides.”

Since culture means many things. If we examine minorities based on the differences of culture in India, it can be noted that there is much cultural variety and it is difficult to determine who is in minority and who is in

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42. Ibid., p. 7. See also Chandhoke Neera, *op.cit.*, p. 63.
44. Wadhwa, Kamlesh Kumar, *op.cit.*, p. 8, and also see Constituent Assembly Debates Vol. VII, p. 896.
majority culturally speaking. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan once remarked in this connection “India is a symphony where there are, as in an orchestra different instrument each with its particular sonority, each with its specific sound.” Therefore it is a vague and unsafe criterion to categorize minorities on patterns of culture. However the judgements of the Supreme Court disclose two types of minorities which have been given protection under the Constitution of India viz. linguistic and religious minorities. G.S. Ghurye, also supports this view; “For the constitution of India, minorities based on culture, race or rationality are non existent and they being based only on language or religion and by implication of both in combination.

K.K. Wadhwa also expresses views similar to that of Balraj Madhok in his study that culture is associated with a country and not with a religion and so far as India is concerned, there is no such thing as Muslim culture or Christian culture in India, there is only one Indian culture which is common to all Indians. Imtiaz Ahmed refutes this argument and says “Like the use of the expression British culture for the culture of Great Britain, the term Indian culture is somewhat a misnomer. India attracted people of different races and religions over centuries and each racial and religious group came to constitute separate community in the complex Indian society. Each community or religious group also had a culture of its own and adhered to a different religio-centric manner of life. So the very concept of an all India culture is controversial. But language and religion are two such things as to a long way in determining the cultural entity of a community. So to be more precise and scientific it is appropriate to comment that Indian Constitution recognises only two types of minorities based on language and religion and also those based on both in combination. Since each of India’s states has an official language.

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46. Ghurye G.S. (1968) *Social Tension in India.* Popular Parkashan, Bombay, p. 44.
47. Wadhwa, K.K., *op. cit.* pp. 8-9 and See *Seminar* No. 137, p. 60.
those who speak another language as their mother tongue regard themselves as belonging to a linguistic minority. India has a complex of language problems and there are 179 languages and 544 dialects. The constitution of India in its Eighth schedule recognises 18 languages as languages of India. Article 343 of the Constitution recognises Hindi as the national and the official language.48

(2) LINGUISTIC MINORITIES:

To explain the term “Linguistic minorities” the Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities states: “Linguistic minorities are minorities residing in the territory of India or in any part thereof, having a distinct language or script of their own.” The definition of term linguistic minority came up for discussion before the supreme courts in some cases. For example in D.A.V. College, Jallandhar V State of Punjab.49 P. Jaganmohan Reddy. J., Speaking for the Supreme court observed:

“A linguistic minority for the purpose of Article 30 (1) is one which must at least have a separate spoken language. It is not necessary that language should also have a district script. There are in this country, some languages which have no script of their own, but nevertheless those sections of the people who speak that language will be a linguistic minority entitled to the protection of Article 30 (1).50

Although the number of languages and dialects enlisted for census purpose runs into several hundreds, the principal languages in the language problem of India are only about a dozen – the regional languages are prevalent in fairly large compact area of the country.

There are three basic problems faced by linguistic minority groups.

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50 AIR, 1971, SC 1742 and also Pandey, B.N. op. cit.,pp. 55-56.
First, the claims of the linguistic groups that education be imparted to their children in their own mother tongues. Secondly the use of minority language in the Administration, lastly the problems of representation of the minorities in the state services.\textsuperscript{51} As regards the first problems, Article 350 A was inserted by the constitution (Seventh Amendment) Act, 1956 which provides, it shall be the endeavour of every state and every local authority within the state to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups.” Secondly, on the question of the use of minority language in the administration, Article 347 says that on a demand being made in that behalf, the president may, if he is satisfied that a substantial proportion of the population of a state desire the use of any language spoken by them to be recognised by the state, direct that such language shall also be officially recognised throughout that state or any part there of, for such purposes as he may specify. Thirdly, as regards the problems of representation of the minorities in state services, a policy has been adopted that language should not be a bar for this purpose and besides the state language, the candidates may be given a choice for using English or Hindi as medium of examination.

Another main feature of the contemporary Indian linguistic scene is that here a linguistic group does not generally correspond to a religious group for example in Bengal, Bengali is the language of the Hindus, the Muslims and Christians alike. These groups have identical linguistic interest in definite area despite their religious differences. So to say, if religion divides India vertically, language divides it horizontally. Further, these divisions very often overlap one another.

The Constitution of India recognise official languages as given in its

Eighth Schedule and Hindi as the national official language and most these language have been recognised as state language, it has created islands of Linguistic Minorities in each state. The Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities states, “linguistic minorities are minorities residing in the territory of India, or any part there of, having a distinct language or script of their own. Languages of the minority group need not be one of the fourteen language mentioned in the schedule VIII to the Constitution. In other words, a linguistic minority at the state level means any group of people whose mother-tongue is different from the Principal language of the state, and at the district-tongue is different from the principal language of the state, and at the district and taluk levels, from this enunciation it appears that the meaning and scope of the term ‘linguistic minorities is wide & comprehensive’.

(3) RELIGIOUS MINORITIES:

In India the problem of religious minority is no less sensitive than that of the linguistic minority. The religious conceptions in the country are so vast that they cover every aspect of life, from birth to death. There is nothing which is not religion. Not only in India but through the world religion has played two distinct roles in society. On the one side it had the effect of unifying large section of people who would otherwise have remained fragmented into other, it has also caused severe division between man and man group and group, nation and nation.

The expression “minority based on religion is used in Article 30(1). The principal basis of a minority must be its adherence to one of the many religions, and not a sect or a part of it and the other features of the minority are subordinate to the main features, its separateness because of its religion. For instance, Hinduism is a religion and Arya Samaj is only a sect of it. Islam is a religion and Shia or Sunnies are only sect of it. Christianity is a religion and Catholics or the Protestants are only a sect of it.

V.S. Deshpande, J. in Arya Samaj Educational Trust, Delhi Vs The Director Education, Delhi Administration observed “No section or class of
Hindus was ever referred to as a minority. In Article 30(1), therefore the word minority cannot apply to a class or a section of Hindus”. However, some religious denominations have sought to have themselves judicially recognised as a separate religion, independent from Hinduism, so as to be entitled to be treated as minority for the purpose of the constitutional protection secured under Article 30”.

But the courts are not unanimous. They are rather shaky, in their approach while dealing with claims. That bears testimony to the difficulties involved. In Dipendra Nath Vs. State of Bihar, Brahmo-Samaj has been held a minority based or religion. In Janki Prasad Vs State the claim of theosophical society has not been accepted. In MC Bandho-Padhaya vs state of West Bengal. Ram Krishnaites have been held as minority based on religion, by the Calcutta High Court but the Supreme Court has rightly reversed the decision of the High Court. The several attempts have been made by the Arya Samaj to have itself judicially recognised as a separate religion independent from Hinduism.

The Supreme Court took in view the state of Punjab for determination of the issue whether Arya Samajists in Punjab constitute a religious minority. The Supreme Court judgement said that the term minority must be determined in relation to the particular legislation which is sought to be impugned, consequently, if it is a state law, then the minorities will be determined in relation to the population of the state. In this case the Court categorically rejected the contention that the minority should be determined by reference to the entire population of India. It is, however, not clear from the judgements as to what would be criteria if the question of defining the minority arises in relation to an impugned central law, will it, there be determined by reference to the entire population of India.

Therefore in case of linguistic, religion or cultured groups, that no group

52 Pandey, Bhrigu Nath, op.cit., pp. 57-58.
constituting 50 percent of the state population may fall under the protection of Article 29 and 30 without there being a single majority community against which minorities may claim protection. Interestingly, there might be certain communities which may be in majority in the particular state, like the Sikhs in Punjab or Muslim in Jammu & Kashmir or Christians in Nagaland, but they may be in minority in relation to the entire population of India.

Table No. 1.0
States in which National, Religious and Tribal minorities are a majority or plurality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Minority Composition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jammu and Kashmir</td>
<td>64.2 percent Muslim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meghalaya</td>
<td>52.6 percent Christian, 80 percent Tribal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagaland</td>
<td>82.2 percent Christian and 89 percent Tribal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>60.8 percent Sikh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arunachal Pradesh</td>
<td>79.0 percent Tribal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mizoram</td>
<td>83.8 percent Christian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Today there are five religious group which have been given the official status of National Minorities, namely the Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Parsees. According to the census of India 1991, their percentage and population are shown in Table 1.1

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Table No. 1.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Name of Religious community</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Total population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>12.12</td>
<td>101,596,057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>19,640,284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sikhs</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>16,259,744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Buddhists</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>6,387,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Parsees</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>76,383</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India 1991, Religion Table-C-9 Part IV B (II) Series 1, New Delhi 1996, PP G-11, 223-249

Although Hinduism is the religion of the majority of Indians. There are important religious minorities such as Muslims and Sikhs, who have been able to preserve their group identities. Two features of India’s religious minorities warrant special note. The **first** is their internal divisions and the **second** is their relationship with Hindus. There are major religious minorities in India like Muslims, Sikhs and Christians etc. Hindus are in majority and constitute 82.6 percent of the population. The people who profess Hinduism are primarily divided into four groups according to the traditional four-fold classification of *Verna* system: Brahmin (teachers & Priests), kshastriya (soldier & administrators), Vaishya (merchants and traders) and shudra (menial workers). They pursue unclean occupations. The Hindus are also further subdivided into different endogamous groups, the *Jati* or caste which is arranged in a hierarchical order.

Muslims constitute the second largest religious community in India. According to the 1991 census they formed 12.12 percent of the total population of India and all over India the Muslims are divided into two major groups, namely, Sunni and Shia, on the basis of their faith in their religion, Muslims are not a homogeneous community, but rather horizontally and vertically divided into various regional and cultural groups as well as into...
classes. Naturally, their response to socio-economic and political problems vary according to their groups interests religious-regional and cultural. Muslims are less cohesive. The Muslims of the south-west have had long-term ties with Arab countries and they continue to migrate in large numbers to work in the Persian Gulf. They speak Malayalam and in their diet and dress they are close to the Hindus. The Muslims of Kashmir form a majority of the state, have strong Kashmiri identity and overwhelmingly speak Kashmiri rather than Urdu. The Muslims living in the Hindi speaking region, from the Yamuna north through the Gangetic plains, live the main stream of the Turkish, Afghan, Mughal and Persians invaders and overwhelmingly (64 per cent) speak Urdu, 70 per cent population of Muslims live in rural areas in India. However, a slightly higher percentage is engaged in traditional trades handicrafts, petty small business, non-agriculture labour etc. After independence, the Muslims faced many alternatives to safeguard their interests, such as organizing a party of their own, working the existing parties or simply forming personnel groups and lobbying of their causes.54

Sikhs in India today enjoy the status of a minority community within the frame work of a secular state. Unlike the other religious minorities, the Sikhs in India occupy an enviable position in all walks of life. Paul R. Brass observes that Sikkism as a distinctive religion has shaped and defined the boundaries of the Sikh Community and over a period of two centuries instilled in large segments of the sikh population a sense of communal solidarity and separateness from Hindus.55

Sikh community is only 1.94% (in 1991) of the total population of the country and is in absolute majority only in the State of Punjab. In all other

states it is in minor traction. The total population of the community is 60.8 per cent. Quite obviously, the greatest concentration of the Sikhs, 78.62 per cent of the total sikh population of the country, is in Punjab sikhs are divided between Scheduled Caste and non-Scheduled Caste Sikhs and between Jat Sikhs and other high caste Sikhs. These divisions have enabled the Congress Party to win substantial support from among the sikhs. The other states accounting for at least one percent of the total sikh population are in adjoining Haryana (6.29 per cent), Rajasthan (1.33 per cent), Delhi (7.16) percent and Jammu and Kashmir (2.29 percent).

From 1961 to 1971, Sikhs increased more rapidly than did both Hindus and Muslims, and from 1971 to 1981 their growth rate continues to be higher than that of the Hindus. In fact, Punjab’s population growth rates from 1961 to 1971 and from 1971 to 1981, are actually below the national growth rates.

The sikh community now has a homeland, but they also have a noticeable diaspora. Of India’s 13.1 million Sikhs, 2-8 million (more than one fifth) live in other parts of India mostly in Haryana, Rajasthan, U.P. and Delhi. Since the Sikhs in the diaspora are heavily urbanized and are physically distinctive they are a noticeable diaspora worldwide. There are substantial numbers of sikh in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and West Germany. These diaspora communities are important sources of support for political movements with in the Punjab. Sikhs are mainly engaged in agriculture, transport business, hotel, restaurants, fabrication businesses and small trades in India.

The fifth largest religious group in India is of the Buddhists who accounted for 4.7 million (0.76 per cent of the total population of India).

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Buddhism originated in India in the sixth century B.C. and was developed as one of the several attempts reformation of the Hinduism of the day. The Jains 3.6 million are so closely associated with Hindus that they are not usually regarded by themselves or by Hindus, as a religious minority. And the Jains constituted 0.5 per cent of the total population of the country. Jainism was founded by Mahavira. Buddhists are normally engaged in traditional activities such as handicrafts, agriculture’s labour and carrying out petty trades and businesses.

Yet another microscopic religious minority is Parsis. It is racial and religious minority. They originally came from Persia in about eighth century to avoid their compulsory conversion to Islam. The first wave of Parsi immigrants landed on the west coast of India in A.D. 706 in what is now the state of Gujarat. They took to the local language Gujarati which they speak to this day. But although the Parsia continued to follow the teaching of Zarathustra in matter of religion, they became acclimatized to Indian culture in their manner of living. It is racial and religious minority. Parsees are generally rich are mainly in services and have their own business establishments. However, some parsees near Surat in Gujarat are reported to be very poor.

The two other religious minorities found in the country are the Zoroastrianism and Judaism the people who profess these religions in India are very few in numbers and consist of descendants of apostates or of immigrants seeking religious freedom. There is still another small, but important minority of India called Anglo-Indians. It is a minority that possesses racial, religious and linguistic characteristics. The Indian Constitution vide Article 366(2) defines the Anglo-Indian as a person whose father or any of whose other male progenitors in the male line is or was of European descent but who is domiciled within the territory of India and is or

Fadia, B.L., Politics of Minorities in India, op.cit., p. 32.

58 Fadia, B.L., Politics of Minorities in India, op.cit., p. 32.

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was born within the territory of parents habitually resident therein and not established there for temporary purposes only. At present the total population of the community according to the census of 1991 is about 3-4 million.

The main focus of our study is to identify the problems and challenges encountered by the Christian community and more particularly the Christian in Punjab where they are in a minority. The Christians are divided into a number of denominations in India. The two broader divisions based upon theological differences are (1) Roman Catholics (2) Protestant. Roman Catholic and follow either the reformed Roman rite or the Syrian Malabar rite nearly 8 million Christians are protestant, with many belonging either to the United Church of North India (a Union of Congregationalists, Presbyterians Anglicans. Methodists. Baptists and Disciples of church dating from 1970) or to the United Church of South India (a Union of Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians Congregationalists and Dutch Reformed, dating from 1947. Both united churches are in communion with the Marthoma Syrian Church of Malabar (numbering about one million members), an autonomous orthodox group that broke away from Syrian orthodox church in the nineteenth century. The Syrian orthodox church itself or the “Thomas Christian” community numbers about one and half million. In addition to these main groups, there are a number of independent Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, Anglican and Pentecostal churches in India. The majority of all Christians in India are to be found in the Southern states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. Christians also present majority populations in the small tribal states of Nagaland and Meghalaya. They are also found in the state of Goa (31 percent). The state of Manipur (26 percent) and in the Union territories of the Andaman and Nicobar Inlands (26 percent) for the most part, Indian Christian derive from the lower classes and castes, many from tribal and untouchable

groups. The Christian are normally inhabiting the urban areas and are engaged in running mission education institutions, hospitals and small business.

After a detailed discussion on culture, language and religion, (pp.23-35) it is felt that the definition developed by the U.N. Sub commission for minority rights, is a comprehensive one and appropriate for the minorities. The term `minority` should be applied only to those groups and communities who constitute a numerical minority in a given polity because of their distinctive culture, religious, linguistic features and are primarily concerned about protection of those features through constitutional safeguards.

PROBLEMS AND METHODOLOGY

Minorities all over the world have in recent times assumed an important, independent and significant status in the study of politics. Minorities play a significant part in the politics of a nation-state. In today’s world, there is hardly any state which is perfectly homogeneous and which does not have minorities of one type or the other. Ranging from highly developed nations like America, Canada, Great Britain to the equally advanced socialist countries like Russia where a large number of minorities exist this problem has become acute and therefore has attracted the attention of scholars. But the problem of minorities is very complex in the Third World countries and poses serious problems in the process of nation building. Much of the problem of majority and minority, of oppressor and oppressed, of those who are in and those who are out, revolves around our basic way of life. Almost the whole of recorded history is really a record of group fighting, conquering and dominating one another. Today, in many parts of the world, conflicts rage between Catholic and Protestant, between Arabs and Jews and between Hindus and Muslims and between White and Black. In India some of

\[61 \text{Ibid., p. 23 & also see Mandev, Pardeep, op.cit. pp. 184-185.} \]
the minorities including Christians played significant role in the nation building but in spite of this, it has remained debarred from enjoying the fruits of its development. An attempt has been made in this study to analyze the problems faced by Christian committee in Indian politics but more particularly in Punjab.

The present study is concerned with the problems of Christians as a minority community in Punjab and their political participation in the state political system. The problem encompasses the whole gamut of the community as such right from the British rule till today. The Christians, as a minority like any other community anywhere else have always had their socio-economic, political and religious problems. In India, their problems became more conspicuous after independence.

During the fifty-five years of India’s independence, Christian community in Punjab believes that they are intentionally debarred and neglected by the centre and the state government in all fields. They have been made a tool, only for the purpose of securing votes. They stand nowhere in comparison to other religious communities. The main reason behind undertaking this research is to study the role of the Christians in the larger context of Indian politics and the Dalit* Christians of Punjab in particular.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The Christians were converted from a strata of the society which is today described as ‘Dalits’. The strata expected to improve their status and prospect by converting themselves to the new faith which did not believe in social differences and also to which the power-elites of the day belonged. Both these factors were expected to enable this strata to escape oppression and

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* I use the term Dalit in this thesis for the following reasons: (a) They have a converted from depressed classes and have past identity. This word means oppressed, broken and crushed. In spite of conversion, still they have miserable socio-economic conditions in India.
exploitation as long as the foreign rule lasted in India. The converts did enjoy some special treatment and benefits during the British Raj. But at the grassroots level, it did not seem to make much difference to them. After the expiry of the foreign rule, whatever preferential position they had enjoyed, disappeared. As a result, by and large, Christians seem to have reverted to their earlier disadvantaged and disempowered status.

The problems addressed by the study include the identification of problems faced by Christian community in general and dalit Christian minority of Punjab in particular. How far they are able to assert themselves and the extent of role and participation in political and socio-economic dimensions of the society of which they are a point need to be addressed.

In the context of this research, the following issues have been taken up for investigation:

1. The privileges enjoyed by Christian community under the British Government.
2. The change, if any, that came about in their position and privileges in post-independent India.
3. The provisions in the Constitution that safeguard the rights, opportunities and privileges of this community.
4. The level and extent of:
   a) Political awareness
   b) Political participation
   c) Political significance of this community
5. The important role of this community in politics at local, district and state levels.
6. The social indicators (like education, health, vocational expertise, economic influence etc.) of the community.
7. Its role and relationship with political parties, administration and economic life of the district and the state.
The number, type, functions and activities of the various social, cultural organisations and societies etc. that the community might have formed.

The elite and the leadership in the community

The activities and aspirations of the community

The nature and the extent of the community’s participation in the political and administrative processes at the local level in the state.

The economic conditions and activities.

The community’s social interactions and relationships with other groups and segments.

The internal dynamics of the community itself.

The policy and steps, if any, that this community proposes to take against discrimination, marginalisation and possible exploitation.

In the context of the research problems and issues raised here, the basic objectives of the present study is first of all to investigate the socio-economic, political and religious problems of the community in Punjab and then to investigate the policy and programme of the Centre and State towards minorities particularly the Christians of Punjab and also assess the strategy of minority leaders for articulation of their demands.

**VALUE OF STUDY**

Our study is essentially in the nature of an essay in the political culture and political behaviour. In so far as its aim is concerned, it analyses the position of a well defined cohesive group in the political environment and politics of a state which is characterised by plurality and prosperity. An attempt has been made to assess the significance and strategy of a minority with regard to the larger polity of a state.

Every research is a step ahead of the previous study. It is an advancement of knowledge. The knowledge is a continuous flow from one generation to another. This study owes debt to the previous distinguished research scholars like Dr. Clarence O. McMullen, Dr. C.O. Webster Rev. Vidya Sagar J. Dogar, Godwin Shri, Baldev Raj Nayyar and Dr. James
Massey for their brilliant studies in this field.

Dr. James Massey’s study on “Dalits in India” is a very significant study. He examines the problems of the Dalit Christians in India. According to him the Dalits are the descendants of the earliest settlers of India. They have suffered and continue to suffer multiple oppressions, which have always been supported by religion, directly or indirectly. He also traces the long history of oppression of the dalits and opines that they have even lost their self-identity. He also expresses that there are a lot of problems of Christians in India and they have been neglected throughout on the basis of religion. They have been deprived of the basic human rights. They have been treated merely as ‘objects’ instead of ‘subjects’. They have lost their identity and social status. Although this study is very useful but it covers only the historical and social aspects of the Dalit Christians. It does not reflect the role of the community in political matters in Punjab.

Brojendra Nath Banerjee’s “Struggle for Justice to Dalit Christians” is the latest and a very significant study. It examines the problems of the Dalit Christians in India. In this regard, various commissions and committees of the central and state government on the backward classes are unanimous in stating that the change in religion has not improved the socio-economic status of Dalit Christians in India and he opines that the discrimination against Dalit Christians is clearly based on religion, and it is totally violation of the Constitution of India and as well as the gross violation of human rights. He highlights some demands of the Dalit Christians. Although his study covers all the aspects like socio-economic and political but does not reflect the role of Christian community in Punjab.

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Banerjee’s studies about the religious conversions in India is very valuable and covers the role of missionaries in conversion and also in social development. In this study, he analyses that the conversions are nothing new in India and coming from the 6th century of B.C. Further, he expresses views that conversion from Hinduism to Christianity, created a new tension and emotion. The Janta government introduced the Bill of Freedom in Parliament. Christians were agitated and raised a voice against the government and demanded justice, equality and freedom without any distinction of caste and creed. In this study, he also expressed that the Christians have played a positive role in social development and even have whole heartedly pledged their loyalty to the secular democratic society. This study also covers the role of R.S.S. which is working against the Christians of India. The R.S.S. organisation is blaming the Christians as an agent of Western culture. Although this study is very helpful but it ignores all aspects of the Christians in Punjab.

Beside these studies, Nazir Masih has made an interesting study on “Educational Status of Christian Dalits of Gurdaspur Area.” The study analyses the socio-economic conditions of the community. It measures the education status of the Christians of Gurdaspur. The author also points out that the Dalit Christians of the Gurdaspur are the most backward community and neglected by the government. As well as by the Church. Even after embracing Christianity, they stand at the lowest rung of society. This study is also confined to socio-economic conditions of the Dalit Christians and it does not deal with political aspect. Therefore, the area of the study is one sided and very limited.


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Frederick in his study “Christians in India”, highlights the role of the Christian community. He expressed that Christians have a lot of contribution in the social work also involved in the national struggle for independence. They have something to add to the cultural richness of Indian heritage. Protestant missionaries were on the scene in large numbers in the 19th century and they played a great role for the work of education and social upliftment. Basically, this study is related to the role and contribution of missionaries towards Indian society but it does not reflect the role of community in the political matters and round about 40 years old study does not have any relevance in the present context.

John Webster has made an exhaustive historical study of the North Indian Church and the Christian community. This study has traced the role of the foreign missionaries. During the nineteenth century, Christians played a pioneering role in education, mitigation of sufferings and in the process of emancipation of both women and outcastes. They played a negligible role in changing the political and economic structure. This study is basically a historical investigation. It represents only one aspect and ignores the socio-economic and political aspect of the Christian community of North India.

Clarence O. McMullen in his study “Christianity in the Punjab”, highlights the miserable socio-economic conditions of the community and states that, politically it is a neglected community. They have no political representation. He also observed that the conversion only brought a mere change of the names of gods and individuals and did not result an implantation of Christian values.

Baldev Raj Nayar in his study “Minority Politics in the Punjab,” analyses the struggle of the Sikh leadership for the Punjabi Suba. Basically, this study is a historical investigation and it ignores the viewpoints of the other minorities of the Punjab. Narayan does not reflect the general views about the efforts and problems of the minorities in Punjab.

Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society published a report in 1961 on the social and political problems of the Christian community in Punjab. The report concludes that the Christian community in Punjab is politically apathetic, and socially and economically backward. The report also points out the poor socio-economic conditions of the Christians. The Christian community in Punjab has not wielded any significant influence. Although, this report is useful but it has left many aspects untouched.

The latest field study was conducted by Amritsar Dioceses. This study was focused on obtaining the information from the Diocesan point of view. But this study has cited ample information from some of the previous field studies, which were conducted primarily to study the different denominations. The Dioceses also quoted the study of E.D.Lucas and E.Y.Campbell. The Church in Punjab in 1961 both highlighted the socio-economic and political problems of community. But the 40 years old study has no relevance in the present political system.

Godwin Shiri tries to find an answer through his study. The main object of this study is, to secure clear and cogent evidences about the social degradation and economic disabilities which the Christian Dalits continue to suffer and thus to help in their ongoing struggle for justice. His study reveals that during the British rule the embracing of Christianity might have provided

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some immediate and temporary relief to the sufferings of Christians. But the state of independence of India of 57 years have really failed to provide any facility. The Christian Church of India also has thoroughly failed in their motive and objectives. In this review, the book is seen from the standpoint of the wider debates going on in the country regarding religious conversions on caste base, reservations and Dalit politics. Also the role of the Church establishment in the larger context.\footnote{1}

Godwin Shiri is comparative study of South Indian States of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. He tries to highlight the socio-economic background of the Christians in various states and also highlights the power social-economics and religious conditions of the community.

The role played by Churches, particularly in health and education field cannot be ignored, but Churches are still incapable of even touching their problems because they are already facing a lot of financial problems. The study also examines the role of mother Teresa for the Dalit Community from time to time.

The book raises a lot of challenging questions about the Church establishment but leaves out the major challenges to be fought by Christian Dalits within the Church. The book convincingly argues the case of the Christian Dalit right to have \textit{protective discrimination}. To that extent, it is pathbreaking and an eye-opening piece of research. Although this study tries to cover different aspect of Dalit Christians of various states but the study is totally silent about the political aspect and also ignores the religious and constitutional rights of the minority communities.

Godwin Shiri in his second book\footnote{2} on “Karnataka Christian and

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{1} Godwin, Shiri (1997) The Plight of Christian Dalits – A South Indian Case Study, Asian Trading Corporation, Bangalore.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{2} Shiri Godwin (1998) Karnataka Christians and Politics, Asian Trading Corporation, CISRS, Bangalore.}
Politics” uses the political culture of protestant Christians of Karnatakas as determined by demographic and sex factors. He also traces that the theological orientation and the socio-economic conditions are the main reasons for political inactiveness of the community. But since this study is limited to only the protestant group, and that too in a limited way, the conclusions drawn by the study cannot be applied to the community as a whole.

Rev. Vidya Sagar J. Dogar’s study on Rural Christian Community in North West India is the latest and a significant study. This study analyses the socio-economic, religious and political conditions of the community. It covers the Punjab, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh. The main objective of this empirical case study is to present clear and cogent evidence about the social degradation and economic disabilities from which the Christian of North West India continue to suffer.

The poor socio-economic condition of the community is creating problems for the community and resulting in exclusion of the community from political aspect. Although they have political consciousness to organize the community and are trying to organize themselves through political parties but lack of unity, dishonesty and selfish leadership, different denominations, leg-pulling and internal quarrels are the main obstacles in the way of unity of Christians

The study also examines the pastoral Care, religion and self-image of the Christian in the North-West region. It shows moderately high status of Christians with an increasing representation at the medium level and significant representation at the high level. The study disproves that the Christians have a low self-image but argues that some assertions, aspirations and political participation of the community are bringing about change in their

73. Sagar, Vidya Dogar. J. (2001) “Study on Rural Christian Community in North West India”, Published for the Christian Institute for the study of Religion and Society by ISPCK, Delhi.
status. This study highlights the socio-economic reality of the Dalit Christians of North-West of India and tries to cover all aspects of the community in the North-West. Earlier studies including Vidya Sagar’s, ignore the various religious, constitutional and political problems and the living realities of the situation.

UNIVERSE OF THE STUDY

Given the problem of the present research, the universe of our study is limited and to consider that, area where Christian population is considerable especially in the different areas of Majha, Malwa and Doaba were selected. Regarding the background of the community, Christians in Punjab, are the result of mass movements and the conversion of the members of lower castes. Majority of the Christians in Punjab live in villages, colonies basties or in mission compounds, whereas the rural Christians form a very homogeneous community in Punjab. The community in Punjab as it is at present constituted, is divided into three areas, Majha, Doaba and Malwa, which are the names for the three areas between the rivers Ravi and Beas, Beas and Sutlej and Sutlej and Jamuna.

The present districts of Gurdaspur and Amritsar form a good chunk of Majha. In both the districts thousands of Christians are settled in rural areas. Some of the areas namely Ajnala, Valtowa, Verka, Jandiala of the district Amritsar, Dera Baba Nanak, Fatehgarh-Churria, Kahanor, Dhariwal, Batala, Gurdaspur and Quadian etc. all have thick population due to the centre point of missionaries activities at Lahore, Amabala and Ludhiana.

The areas lying south of the river Sutlej bound by the Khajjar stream in the east and sandy districts of Ludhiana, Patiala, Moga, Muktsar, Sangrur, Faridkot, Ropar, Fatehgarh Sahib, Bhatinda and Ferozepur fall in Malwa, here in there is microscopic population except two districts of Ludhiana and Ferozepur of Punjab. In these districts, some reputed Christian institutions like Christian Medical College (CMC), Ludhiana and Brown Hospital of
Ferozepur are worth mentioning. In both, many Christians are working with national spirit and making a rich contribution not only to Christians but in the whole societal content also. The districts of Jallandhar, Nawanshahar, Kapurthala and Hoshiarpur lie between the Beas and Sutlej rivers and are known as Doaba. The church missionary started work in Kapurthala in 1860, Hoshiarpur in 1867 and Jallandhar in 1886 respectively. They also opened more branches in Phillaur, district Jallandhar, in 1897. In these districts, the population of the Christians cannot be ignored.

Presently, Punjab is divided into 17 districts. In terms of the overall population distribution, the districts can be divided into three broad categories:

1. District Amritsar and Gurdaspur are both the deciding factors in many Vidhan Sabha Assemblies and Lok Sabha election of Punjab.
2. Ludhiana, Ferozepur, Hoshiarpur, Jalandhar have considerable Christian population.
3. Rest of the districts of Punjab have marginal and scattered population.

This study relies exclusively on combination of historical empirical/case study methods. The study largely depends on the primary, secondary and field investigation sources. Regarding the primary sources, all the official documents and mission records were consulted from the various places including “The Holy Bible”. For the issue on the Christian participation in electoral political processes, data was collected through the survey and interview methods. Also many members of the Minority Rights Commission, social workers, Christian leaders, writers and Church leaders have also been consulted and interviewed keeping in view the context of this study. The literature pertaining to Christian community in the form of books, periodicals, journals and manuscript has been thoroughly examined for their utility and relevance to our study.