Chapter 3

Law and Conversion
(i) Introduction

Perhaps in no other country has conversion been resisted so consistently as in India. Even in the wake of the great missionary expansion of Christianity, eminent leaders like Rammohun Roy had tried to oppose conversions on theoretical grounds. Later, the Arya Samaj has been putting up a strong resistance to conversions by initiating a counter-movement of reconversions to Hinduism. In recent years, several attempts have been made, both at the State level and at the Centre, to ban conversions even by special legislation. As against all this, particularly Christians have been ventilating their protests time and again, considering the charges against them as unfounded and biased, and clearly asserting their fundamental rights to freedom, "freedom to profess, practise and propagate their religion."

Thus in India there has arisen an actual controversy about conversion, between Hindus on the one hand and Christians on the other. But the problem is not restricted to them only. Given the multi-religious character of India, conversion from one religion to another will always be a controversial issue: "Should conversions be allowed or not?" It is this burning issue that we propose to consider in five chapters. We shall, in this chapter, analyse the grounds on
which Hindus have based their attempt to resist conversions by law. We shall also consider the corresponding replies from the Christians. Christians have not merely replied to the charges of the Hindus, but have also tried to understand the Hindu resistance sympathetically and meet it sincerely. One such attempt is 'inculturation' of the converts. How far such an attempt is fruitful we shall examine in the next chapter. We, then, move on to dig out the fundamental presuppositions of both the parties to the controversy. Finally, in a different chapter, we shall attempt to give an over-all analysis of the whole problem of conversion.

In this chapter, we shall try to give a clear account of the grounds (or, the charges) proposed by Hindus in support of their move to ban conversions by Law. Corresponding to each type of charges, we shall also give the replies from the side of the Christians. The views of both the parties are presented under three heads: the question of ulterior motives, the question of illegitimate methods, and the social and other consequences. In the final Section we shall give an analysis of the position of both the parties, wherein we shall show that the demand for legal prevention of conversion and the demand for freedom to convert are both unfounded and that they ultimately call for a consideration of their presuppositions about religions.
Ulterior motives

There has been a growing suspicion among the majority community of India, that Christian conversions could be used for ulterior purposes, more specifically, by foreign Powers to enhance their political objectives. In support of this, the following grounds are suggested.

(1) Even as early as the 13th century, Carpini, a missionary was sent to China on a mission of espionage.  

(2) Portuguese in India have used missionaries for extending their State Power.  

(3) The post-war policy of the Western Powers (Anglo-American Block in the Cold War) has been to use evangelism as a force in their attempt to revive their Supremacy, as against the possible supremacy of the Communist Block. The main reasons given are the following: (a) After the promulgation of the Indian Constitution, with its provision for religious freedom, there has been an accelerated form of evangelistic activity from the Western countries, even with financial support from them. (b) With increased giving for Church support, American Democracy has assumed leadership. (c) Against the background of the Cold War it is not altogether impossible that the American Block uses evangelism as a force to revive their Supremacy, specially because the accelerated
form of evangelistic activity was professedly against Communism. The drive for proselytization in India can be an attempt to acquire an additional base, which is, of course, psychological. The outcasts and the aboriginals, converted to Christianity can be primed with hatred against their countrymen, if for no other reason than the fact that the latter are 'idolaters' and that the former belong to the Kingdom of God.

However, the contention of Christians is that missionary activity is solely for spiritual motives, the need of spreading the message of Christ. In support of their claim, they produce the innumerable names of missionaries like St. Francis Xavier, Fr. Damien the leper, and so on. If these men could turn their back on all the things the normal man so deeply prizes — home, family, comfort, wealth, etc — and go to distant places with no chance of personal worldly profit, and lose themselves among unknown people, braving every kind of pain and discomfort, and even death, it was only because of their love of Christ and love of their fellowmen. The very missionary activity of the Church takes its origin not from Caesar, but from Christ, who commissioned his Apostles to "go throughout the whole world, and preach the gospel to all mankind." So, it is claimed that to relate this purely spiritual character of missionary activity with political motives of the State Powers is, at best, a misunderstanding.
of the truth or/and at worst mal-intention of people to malign
the Church.

As regards the specific charges, first with regard to
the case of Carpini, (1) above, it is said that he was an
ambassador, and not a missionary. He was a Franciscan Friar,
sent by the Pope and the Council of Lyons in 1245, to negotiate
with Mongol commanders, with a view to saving Christiendom
from further conquests. His specific work as an ambassador
should not be described as a mission of espionage as Serdar
Panikkar has done, it is claimed.16

Regarding the charge in (2) above, it is said, the
missionaries, far from being a help to the rulers, have been
hindrance to them. They have been looked upon as unwanted
moral censors, and as obstacles to their brutal treatment of
their native subjects, and of their immoral practices.17

Further, it is argued that Portuguese authority did not extend
beyond Goa and the West coast, south to Goa. Whereas the
ey early missionaries ventured far beyond Goa and the West, even
as far as Madras, Tenjore and Madurai in the South, Chittagong
in Bengal, Agra and Lahore in the north. This itself should
prove their spiritual motive and zeal.18

The reply to the charge mentioned in (3) above, consists
of many stages just as the charge itself. First of all, it
pointed out that the acceleration of Christian Missions
took place as early as 1813 and onwards, and not after the Independence of the country. Even when the East India Company followed a policy of neutrality in religious matters, and even prohibited the entry of missionaries in their territories in India, the first English Missionaries dared no come to India and settled outside the borders of the English Government, carried on their missionary activity. This itself is taken as a proof of their purely spiritual motives. Again, it was their spiritual zeal that moved them to establish missionary societies like IMS, CMS and so on, and the Evangelical Movement, which in turn made untiring efforts, and finally succeeded in getting the 'missionary clause' introduced in the Charter Act of 1813. In fact, it is in virtue of that clause that missionaries came in great numbers both from England and America and began their missionary work in an accelerated way.

As regards (b) of the charge (3) above, it is maintained by Christians that it is, at best, a pure misunderstanding of the organizational functioning of the Church. In the case of the Catholic Church, the position is this: when one of its units becomes unwieldy and unmanageable, it is suitably divided up and is placed under the care of the missionary congregations of the different countries, according to exigencies. Thus the Ranchi Mission was placed under the
Belgian priests, Hazaribagh Mission under the care of the Australian congregations, The Missions of U.P. were taken care of by the Italian Missionaries. The Madurai Mission was placed under the French Jesuits. The missionary activities in the Bombay Presidency were conducted by the Spaniards and Germans. Now India itself is able to send missionaries to other countries.

When the central Church at Rome allocates the new units to the missionary congregations of a country, it becomes the responsibility of that particular congregation from that country to take care of that new unit by its own personnel and money. So, whatever money the new unit gets from abroad is only from that 'parent institution' or the 'mother congregation'. Sometimes also the central pool of the Church of Rome helps the new units in some special cases. But never is money got from a political source at all. And every paisa received thus is audited and given an account of to the Home Ministry in India. Administration of Churches and finances are never done in secrecy, as in the case of underground organizations. Further it is pointed out by Christians, that the money, so received, is used for the construction of schools, hospitals and other social work, and is never used for political purposes. The conclusion from all this is that money received from overseas should not be misunderstood
as means of spreading the influence of foreign political powers, much less, American Democracy.

Finally, it is pointed out that the constant teaching of the Church has been that missionaries should keep off politics and political bias, and be interested only with welfare of the people and so on. The Church in India also has no political axe to grind at all. As a proof of this, it is shown how Indian Christians voluntarily refused the communal representations offered them when the Constitution was being drawn up. In spite of all this, if motives of Indian Christians are suspected, they feel they are betrayed by the Majority Community, in whose faith they had put all their trust before giving up such privileges as Communal Representations. Their fear of menace to the minorities is further confirmed by the RSS ideology which was best expressed by Golwalkar in his unmincing words: "The non-Hindu people in Hindustan must adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but those of glorification of the Hindu race and cultures.... They must cease to be foreigners or may stay in the country wholly subordinate to Hindu nation, claiming, deserving no privileges or any preferential treatment not even citizens' rights." Against this background, the minorities say they are led to think it
is some of those Hindus who have the ulterior motive in accusing them so dubiously. 29

(iii) Methods

The accusing side knows full well that mere suspicion of the motives of missionaries will not be sufficient ground for curbing their activities. They also know that even for suspecting the motives, one should be able to provide some concrete evidence. So they have pointed their accusing finger at many of the concrete programmes of the missionaries as illegitimate methods. The different charges pertaining to this may be grouped in the following way:

(1) Material inducements: Many of the Christian missionary activities are taken to be means of inducing people to become Christians. (a) Programmes like Co-operative Societies' loan, employments, promise of gifts of slates, plough, bullocks, milk powder etc., are powerful means of winning converts. 30 (b) But exploiting the agrarian grievances of the aboriginals against zamindars and Rajahs, taking them to the courts and fighting for their rights, financing court cases, and securing their freedom from the various petty demands from the Darbar, the missionaries have induced the poor to join Christianity. 31
(2) **Allurements of schools and orphanages:** Subtle devices and devious methods like giving free books, free boarding and lodging, calling upon students to attend Bible classes, Christian prayer services etc. are used. Orphanages are used as a fertile field for proselytization of minors.

(3) **Hospitals and dispensaries** are also used for conversions. The in-door patients are persuaded to become Christians in order to be cured by actually offering prayers, imploring divine aid. In the eyes of the Law, the relation between a doctor and a patient is fiduciary and so any influence, brought to bear on the patient, would be presumed to be undue influence and therefore obviously objectionable.

(4) Even **force** has been used in converting people to Christianity. To substantiate this charge are cited (a) Vasco da Gama's letter to the king of Portugal describing his invasion of Goa. (b) Royal Charters under the Portuguese Powers in India. They compelled the people either to accept Christianity or to leave the State. (c) Inquisition, that "unholy and wicked institution" which was used for mass proselytization.

From all these, the accusing side claims that it is clear that the methods employed in conversions by Christian missionaries are objectionable, and therefore they conclude that such conversions must be prevented by Law.
As against this, the Christians claim that these charges are all false. First of all, it is pointed out that the very stand of the Church is clearly against force or fraud. Even during the Middle Ages, when the Christian emperors and kings showed a keen interest in expanding Christianity along with expansion of their kingdoms, the official philosopher of the Church, St. Thomas Aquinas clearly denounced it: "We should therefore sin grievously if we undertook to spread the faith of Christ by such means... We must send to these peoples, not conquerors who oppress them, scandalise them, enslave them, but holy preachers capable of converting them to God by their prayer and their example". Papal documents are also cited to corroborate it. A clear cut expression of such denoucements in the recent times, is further, pointed out from the Vatican II. "The Church strictly forbids forcing anyone to embrace the faith, or alluring or enticing people by worthy techniques."

The very understanding of conversion by the Church is never as something external, or ritual; but purely as a change of heart, moved by the grace of God internally. So, all the missionary activities are just ways of evangelization, i.e. presentation of Christ's teachings both in words and deeds. If, of course, people are moved by Christ's influence, and are internally drawn to live the Christian
experience, along with the body of believers, then the rite of baptism is conferred just to ratify that internal conversion. Even that rite cannot be administered by the priest at his whims and fancies. The Church demands him to first verify the motive of the receiver, whether genuinely spiritual, for which purpose he is bound to give a probationary time to the would-be convert. If that man, who opts to join the Church, finds that he had made a mistake in choosing that religion, he can easily leave off during that time of probation. Thus, there is no question of force or fraud involved here, it is claimed.

Further it is pointed out that the whole tradition of humanitarian service in Christianity has sprung up and is continued as the very expression of their faith, -- which says that service to the needy is service to God-- and in observance of the specific commandment of Christ, their Master-- which says they should love their neighbour, the neighbour being the one who is in need of help. So, Indian Christians entreat their Hindu compatriots to look at the different aspects of humanitarian service, -- socio-economic, educational, medical etc.-- in their proper perspective, and not as baits for simply converting people to Christianity. If this had been the real aim of missionary activity, they further pointed out, it would have long been stopped as a bad business. For
even though the church has existed in India for centuries, 
and in spite of all effort and sacrifices, and enormous 
expenditure of labour and money, the Christian population 
is fractional.\textsuperscript{43}

The possibility of aberrations is not denied by Indian 
Christians. They do accept that there may have been some 
over-zealous priests who might have been interested in numbers 
and may have occasionally used some benefit or other in the 
case of some individuals. But they are only rare and exception¬
tional cases, which can be punished by the ordinary law of the 
land.\textsuperscript{49} To warrant a special legislation as that of O.P. 
Tyagi's Bill, it is pointed out, there has to be enough 
evidence, as distinct from vague rumours and allegations, 
that the evil of such conversions by force or fraud is rampant 
and that they are carried out in a systematic way, and in a 
wide-spread manner. But the Tyagi's Bill has not given such 
a support at all. Nor even Niyogi Committee Report was able 
to prove any such cases. In this context, then, it is claimed 
that to introduce a Bill, with an innocuous title,\textsuperscript{50} and 
w warranting such a disproportionate punishment, is really 
illegitimate, contrary to the secularistic and democratic 
framework of the Indian Constitution.

As regards the charge of force during the Portuguese 
times, it is claimed that the Charters were meant only to
banish idolatry, but not the people. Fr. Heras, in an analysis of several accounts of travellers of 16th and 17th centuries, establishes that Hindus were not actually driven from Goa. In respect of the other charge about the Inquisition, the same historian says it is baseless. The very purpose of the Inquisition was only to declare Christian heretics, obnoxious to the public welfare, harmful to the spiritual health of the general public, never to convert anybody into the Catholic Faith. He grants that there might have been some cases where a too zealous Captain or an over enthusiastic priest might have forced some people to become Christians. But he cites many documental evidence to prove that the policy of Portuguese Power in India was never for forcible conversions.

(iv) Socio-Political Consequences

Even if the motives are good and the methods legitimate, the consequences of conversion can be disadvantageous to the country politically, socially and culturally. So conversions must be banned by Law. This is the argument of the accusing side. The different aspects of this charge, along with the grounds, are explained in the following way:

(1) Grave political consequences are bound to occur from Christian conversions, because of the following factors:
(a) A clear attempt to 'denationalize' the converts, to
'detach the converts from the nation' and even to 'alienate them from the nation' is clear. Missionary literature abounds in phrases which suggest to the converts that they do not belong to the country, e.g., they are described as 'colony of heaven', 'historical community of the redeemed', 'in the country but not of the country', 'rooted in the soil and yet supranational in its witness and obedience' etc. (b) The idea that, when there is a conflict between Church and State, the true Christian must choose Christ, will create double allegiance among people in a secular State like India. (c) Churches' dependence upon foreign aids makes them accountable to some authority in a foreign country which again will prove detrimental to our national interests.

(2) **Social consequences** of conversions are also of grave concern, because the converts are usually de-socialized and de-culturalized from the traditional form. (a) Individuals, when converted, usually don't care about their former caste, disown all obligations to their own group, and are deprived of the values represented by their own families, friends, and their rich tradition. (b) Mass-conversions, particularly of the Tribals, happen along with a de-culturalization of their past, and westernization of habits, customs, dress, names etc.
(3) Christian conversions have brought about consequences which are even anti-national in character. Thus the secessionist tendencies among the aboriginals, culminating in a demand of a separate State of Jarhand, 'on the lines of Pakistan' was due to their conversion to Christianity.\textsuperscript{62} Again, it is held, the violent turn of events in Tripura, the insurrections in Nagaland and Mizoram are all suspected to have been inspired by foreign missionaries' backing, as well as the foreign welfare agencies working there.\textsuperscript{63}

Now we may state the stand of the other side in respect to the charges raised above. First, as regards the phrases suggesting denationalization \textsuperscript{7} it is said that these are used just to describe a spiritual fellowship and the other-worldly aspirations of a true Christian.\textsuperscript{64} Such phrases have been used right from the beginning of the Church's existence, even against the background of great empires like the Roman, without any room for alarm.\textsuperscript{65} Later, when Christianity spread to the whole of then-known world, its supranational character was recognized by the kings of respective nations. In modern times it has been recognized by all the Parliaments, and People's Governments, including the Indian Government by granting the rights of representation to the Vatican by the Papal Internuncio at the Centre.\textsuperscript{66} In respect of the danger of double loyalties \textsuperscript{7} it is
pointed out that it is only in the limited region of faith and morals that the Catholics are bound to show loyalty to the Pope, and that too on certain clear-cut conditions. So there is no danger at all. Finally, as regards the foreign aid, it is explained that it is only a gift from the parent institution to a newly started unit, and that too till that unit becomes self-sufficient. And there is no question of being accountable to an authority abroad, in so far as it is only a gift.

In respect of de-socialization effects of individual converts, referred to in (ii,a) above, they have been taken, note of by Christian Missions and have been thoroughly discouraged too. With regard to the deculturalization of the Tribals, it is pointed out that every effort taken by the Government to modernize Tribals, be it education, industry, adult-franchise, or money-economy is bound to deculturalize them, and not their conversions. Under these circumstances, it is asked, why should the missionaries alone be accused of de-tribalization? Moreover, it is pointed out that it is actually the missionaries who have really contributed to preservation of the Tribal languages, and other cultural heritages. With the new spurt of inculturalization, thanks to the inspiration of the Vatican II, it is the Church which seems to be the main medium for preserving and promoting the
local culture in all aspects. It is said, therefore, that it is unjust and contrary to facts to blame the Church or Christian conversions as the cause of deculturalization.

With regard to the charge of secessionist activities of the Christian missionaries, it is claimed that it is only a suspicion ventilated by anti-Christians. Long back, an objective and unbiased paper asked such people: "Tell the facts, and clear the air of bias, bigotry and evilly inspired misrepresentation of truth." Even now, nobody has been able to produce any concrete evidence to support the suspicion. As regards the Jharkhand Movement and other activities in the NEFA, it is pointed out that they are general Tribal movements rather than Christian movements. Having acquired a social consciousness and a clear awareness of their political and economic rights, if the Tribals want to assert their rights, so could they be blamed? it is asked. Even the research of non-Christian scholars says that "the continued failure of the Government to safeguard the interests of the tribesmen led to the formation of the Jharkand Political Party, which aims at righting those wrongs under which the tribesmen suffer." Despite it, if some politicians and even some responsible persons in the Government hold the Christian Missions responsible for subversive activities, it is asked, could it not be that their aim is to cover up the various acts
of omission and commission on the part of the authorities over the years?74

As regards the 'foreign hand' or 'inspiration of foreign missionaries' in the NEFA, it is said that it is easy to blame the missionaries because of the geo-political isolation, exposure to a sensitive international boundary ethnic distinctiveness, record of insurgency etc. But the Christians point out that the so called 'foreign missionaries' being the cause of such insurgencies could be a myth. Because referring to actual statistical data, they point out that Assam has just two missionaries. There is none in Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura. Meghalaya has 39.75 Even on these few foreign missionaries, a constant watch is kept, their letters are opened, telephones are tapped, their movements are controlled. In spite of all these, why should rumours be spread calumniating the 'foreign missionaries' and maligning their spiritual work? Indian Christians only ask their Hindu brethren to remove bias and look at the facts straight and get rid of unnecessary suspicions.

(v) An Analysis

In the foregoing account, we have just presented the two sides of the controversy. One party adduces certain grounds with a view to opposing conversions by a special legislation. Whereas the other party, replying to those
charges claims freedom to carry on their missionary activity. The charges as well as their replies, contain a lot of historical and other data. One consideration of the controversy would mean an analysis and sifting of the given data in support of each side, and verifying whether the data given by either party are the actual data and so on. But such an analysis would mean a historical and sociological inquiry, which is beyond the scope of our thesis, as a philosophical inquiry. So, we restrict ourselves only to the presentation of the types of arguments involved, and consider their validity.

We shall first see the strength of the different grounds proposed in terms of (a) motives, (b) methods, and (c) consequences.

(a) With reference to motives, the accusing side contends that the missionaries have ulterior motives in pursuing the missionary activities. The grounds given in support of such a claim are some instances like Carpini's. Whereas the other side claims their motives are purely spiritual. In support of their claim, they also produce a number of instances like that of St. Francis Xavier.

What is striking here is there is no real argument at all involved. What one side claims is only a general
suspicion of political motives. And what the other side claims is only an assertion of one's own motives to be such and such. What is given as ground by both parties is no ground, because what one party gives as a ground is only an instance or illustration of the general suspicion, which that party cherishes against the other. Likewise what the other party gives as a ground is again only an instance illustrative of its own claim. However, a mere enumeration of instances cannot form a ground for establishing a suspicion of another's motives, or for establishing one's own motives.

An enumeration of a number of instances may be sufficient ground for suspecting another's motives, or for asserting one's own motives. But that cannot be a necessary condition for establishing the suspicion of another's motives or for the assertion of one's own motives. The need of establishing one's suspicion of another's motives has not been realized by the accusing side. Nor has the other side realized the need for establishing one's motive to the satisfaction of the other.

A mere suspicion of another's motive cannot be a ground for taking an action against his activities. So the accusing side should be able to establish its suspicion and prove it to the satisfaction of the other: "You have such and such ulterior motive, because of such and such grounds."
Hence, the question: 'on what grounds can one question somebody's motives?' is important to be considered before accusing another of having an ulterior motive. But this question has not been taken note of by the accusing side. Nor has it made any attempt to justify its suspicion of the other party's motives.

Nor can the other side simply get over the charge by asserting that it has no ulterior motives. It ought to justify that its motives are really spiritual. Again that justification cannot be a general one, e.g., if the Church says that it has instructed its priests and bishops to shun other motives, and be concerned only with spiritual welfare of the people, this cannot be a sound justification for the spiritual motives of its missionary endeavours. For, motives can change from person to person, and even with reference to the same individual motives can change from time to time. Perhaps it is only in the case of highly spiritual personalities that the question of personal justification of motives does not arise. But in the case of all others justification of motives not only a general kind (as the Church's instruction to its priests) but also of a personal kind, is absolutely necessary, in order to ask somebody else to accept one's motives as genuine.

Personal justification of motives becomes necessary not only for the sake of others, but even for oneself. It
is quite possible that the assertor does not understand his own motives. "Whether I am infatuated by 'X' or really I am in love with 'X'?". This cannot be answered with any justification merely by asserting that "I am really in love with 'X'." For, it is possible that I have all the time been only infatuated by 'X'. But I may have been under a powerful delusion that I was really in love with 'X'. This is a clear case of self-deception. To take another illustration, there may be a priest who may have been all the time thinking that his motive for becoming a priest was really spiritual, but really he may have been all the time cherishing only worldly motives. If, then, one is not to be in self-deception, one needs to establish one's motives even to oneself.

Such a justification of one's motives is much more warranted especially when one's activities, like those of the missionaries, affect the interests of not only a few individuals, but of a whole community, and even of different communities, or of the whole nation.

Now, how can one justify his motives? One way is perhaps to consider one's activities during the entire range of a considerable part of one's life, the methods one employs in his activities, and the concrete results one produces out of his activities. If we are right in this, then for justifying the motives of the missionaries, it is necessary to consider
what happens as a result of conversion to the converted individuals, to the community of individuals, what happens not only to the community of the converted, but also to the community of the unconverted, and what happens to the entire community. May be it is necessary to consider the different dimensions of 'what happens' to a converted group, say the Tribal Christians, and their non-converted counterparts spiritually, economically, politically and so on. But such a justification does not seem to have been attempted by either of the parties.

Probably each side thinks that it is sufficient to adduce instances to establish its own claim. But that will not do here, even though sometimes it might be sufficient. For, each side takes only those cases which are favourable to one's own claim, and ignores to take into account of those cases which are unfavourable to itself, or favourable to the other side. Thus, for instance, the accusing side takes the cases like that of Carpini whereas the other side takes cases like that of St. Francis Xavier and so on. Even if both the parties revert to the same case, one interprets it in such a way that it is favourable to oneself, whereas the other interprets the same in a way that is favourable to itself. Thus the Carpini's case is interpreted as a missionary sent on a mission of espionage by one, whereas the other interprets the same as an ambassador.
Presumably, each side, trying to multiply cases which are favourably to oneself, wants to prove its claim by the number of instances one can adduce to one's side. But one cannot decide the question of motives on the basis of majority of cases. For, when it has not been possible to establish with regard to each case separately, how can it be established with respect to a number of cases? Even if it was possible to decide with regard to some particular instances of the past that it was politically motivated or spiritually motivated, it would be difficult to ascertain which cases are more and which cases are less in each side, because what has been less in the past can be more in the future, and what has been more in the past can be less in the future.

Thus it is evident that no side's claim in respect of motives is really established. If at all a side has established its claim it has established it only to the satisfaction of themselves, and not to the satisfaction of the other side, or to that of the well-meaning people.

(b) With regard to the legitimacy of the methods, the only argument, if at all there is any, that the accusing side gives is this that they will cater to the socio-economic interests of the converts and thus they are bound to be baits to the converts. Whereas the other side's defence is that the spiritual side of man's life cannot be isolated from the
socio-economic aspects, and that it is only by serving the poor and helping the needy that they can show their love of God.

But the arguments of both sides are trivial and can be rebutted. Thus, as against the argument of the accusing side, it can be said that the socio-economic upliftment is not necessarily detrimental to the spiritual development, sometimes it may even be necessary. Likewise, as against the other side it can be argued that the economic development can also be harmful to spiritual attainment, and in fact in spite of hardships in the economical aspects of life, people have attained great heights of spirituality. In the same way while humanitarian service can be the best way of expressing God's love, it can also be used as a means of allurement, in order to strengthen one's socio-political base, if not always on the part of one who gives, it can very well be on the part of the received.

In short, the fundamental difficulty about the methods in missionary activities is about deciding when the socio-economic interests detract people from pursuing their spiritual goal, and when they form part and parcel of the spiritual pursuit. One side can give a number of cases where material interests have detracted people from pursuing their spiritual goal, and the other side can also give a number of cases where
socio-economic uplift of people has actually enabled them to attain spiritual strength. Even if both refer to the same instance of a conversion, one will give an interpretation so as to dub that case as a purely corrupt case of conversion which took place only for socio-economic interests. Whereas the other side can give another kind of interpretation according to which the case of conversion will have to be said purely a spiritual endeavour.

Under these circumstances, the contention of both sides will remain only at the level of assertion and counter-assertion. There would be no way of really deciding the issue in favour of or in opposition to any side.

(c) In respect of consequences also, the situation does not seem to be any better. This would be clear from the following considerations.

The whole argument in support of the accusing side is that the consequences of the missionary activities have not been really of spiritual character, but rather they have been disadvantageous to the converts spiritually, and to the country politically, socially and culturally. Whereas the other side argues that the national interests have not been affected either socially, culturally or politically, and that the consequences to the converts have been of a spiritual kind. In support of each one's claim each side adduces
instances which are favourable to itself. Thus one side enumerates what it claims/the political insurrections like the Jharkand movement, NEPA movements and so on, whereas the other side will bring up the other effects such as the giving up of immoral practices like head-hunting, polygamy etc., on the part of the Tribesmen.

And even if both sides refer to the same instance each side will give an interpretation favourable to itself. Thus with reference to Jharkhand movement, it has been claimed by one side that it is a political movement, organized with a view to separating Jharkand in the line of Pakistan. Whereas the other side has said that the real consequence of their activities are really the 'conscientization' of the peoples' rights, of their oppression from the landlords and zamindars and so on. And if the Adivasis have claimed for Jharkand separately it is only to free themselves from such oppression, and it is only in line of the linguistic separation of states like Tamilnad, Kerala, Karnataka etc. but never in line of Pakistan.

But this way of arguing by adducing favourable cases, or favourable interpretations to the cases, in support of one's claim cannot be really adequate. Just by claiming a case to be of spiritual consequence one cannot establish one's claim. It has to be shown that it is spiritual. Likewise the other
side cannot just claim that this instance is of non-spiritual consequence. It has to show that it is really of non-spiritual character. How to show something to be of such and such consequence? May be one will have to analyse the different dimensions involved in the occurrence of an effect. And the different dimensions of a particular phenomenon cannot be narrowed down by what one side wants to see and interpret, but rather by all the dimensions of the phenomenon seen with open eyes, and in all its respects. Thus it may be necessary to analyse a case of conversion in terms of these questions: (a) What would have happened, if this had not happened? (b) What would have happened if something else had happened? (c) What are the different stages by which what has happened, has happened? But this kind of analysis has not been attempted by either of the parties so far.

Even were such an analysis attempted, we think that it would not be possible to make clear which part of the consequence is spiritual and which is social; or at least, it would be very very difficult. Because, political effects could be part of spiritual effects, though they need not be. Social consequences could be involved in the spiritual effects, though they need not necessarily be. Likewise, economic cultural and other consequences could be part of the spiritual consequences, though again, they need not. Again, economic,
cultural and other consequences could be part of spiritual consequences, though need necessarily so. With such an intermixture of consequences in one and the same occurrence of a phenomenon, what, in each case, would be the mixture is not easy to decide; which part is more which part less could not be determined at all. One side would claim that socio-political consequences are more, whereas the other side would claim that spiritual consequences are really more. This would be possible only in terms of assertion and counter assertion, and never in terms of a proof on one or the other side.

Now let us go into the question of the validity of the conclusion.

The conclusion of the accusing side is that conversations must be opposed by law, the grounds being the ulterior motives, objectionable methods, non-spiritual consequences. Whereas the other side, trying to refute each of those charges, hopes to have established its conclusion viz. that their fundamental right 'to profess, practise and propagate their religion' should be safeguarded.

But as we have already shown that the arguments on both sides are inadequate, their conclusion also really remains unestablished. That is, since the motives of the missionaries
have not been established to be completely political and the methods and consequences to be purely socio-economic, the accusing side has really no grounds to ban conversions by legislative measures. But this does not mean that the other side can claim complete freedom to carry on conversion programmes, as such. Because, it also has not established its motives to be solely spiritual, or its methods and consequences to be purely spiritual. So ultimately, the inadequacy of arguments on both sides leaves the question open.

And yet each side sticks to its arguments. As against the set of reasons given by one side, there could be honourable reasons for conversion: that is, motives can be pure, methods can be good, and the consequences can be spiritual. As against the set of reasons given by another side there could be dishonourable reasons for conversion: that is, motives could be political or mixed with political motives, methods could be mere baits, and consequences could be non-spiritual. But each side claims that its own position regarding these grounds as well as the conclusion is the correct one. Where does the strength come from, then?

May be the strength for each side comes from its own bias and prejudice against the other side. But this cannot be a sound explanation. For, centuries-old traditions cannot be based simply on prejudice. There must have been best minds
on both sides, and also great saints on both sides. So a more plausible explanation is that the strength for each side comes from the presupposition each side has about the nature of religions.

Evidently the fundamental Indian presupposition is that all religions are equal. So within this framework, conversion as a programme, can have very little place, even if the motives, methods and consequences were all honourable. So, the real strength of the accusing side is not really in its attempts to accuse the other side of having ulterior motives, using illegitimate methods, and causing non-spiritual consequences. However, the actual supporters of Law like Niyogi Committee, and Tyagi do not seem to be clear about this. Even if they were clear about it they have not openly said it. May be because they are afraid of being branded unsecular. Naturally therefore they are frantically trying to derive a conclusion — which they want to derive — from the premises which are inadequate. So they miserably fail. If on the contrary they could directly base themselves on their basic presupposition of the nature of religions, that will really give strength to their conclusion, however inadequate may be their arguments in terms of motives, methods and consequences.

In the same way, the conclusion of the other side, in favour of conversion, cannot really be based on the claim that
motives, methods, and consequences etc., are honourable. For, as already shown earlier, they all could be mixed with dishonourable elements, and it will be difficult, if not impossible, to discern and prove which part is honourable and which part is dishonourable. So, the real strength for conversion, at least in the best cases, can come only from one's presupposition that one's religion alone is the Truth or that one's religion alone is possible to give salvation to people. This alone could be adequate strength for conversion, even if the grounds, in terms of motives, methods, consequences etc., are not strong enough. Otherwise the case for conversion would necessarily be weakened in view of the mixed nature of motives, methods and consequences, and the consequent problem of establishing the genuineness of the motives, legitimacy of the methods, and the spiritual aspects of the consequences.

In fine, therefore, decision in favour of one or the other side will have to depend upon a consideration of the fundamental presuppositions of each side about the nature of religions (which we propose to do in a later chapter).