ABSTRACT

CHRISTWARD MOVEMENT AMONG URBAN DWELLERS IN NORTH INDIA: A STUDY ON DELHI

by

Jaison George P. V.

This dissertation is a systematic study of Christward movement among urban dwellers in Delhi. Christward movement is an emerging phenomenon in various cities in North India. In this time of openness to the gospel, this dissertation attempted to seize the opportunity in cities and develop strategies that would accelerate Christward movement in Delhi. It included insights from biblical, theological, and Indian contextual studies on conversion to build a strong foundation for the movement. Various significant topics covered in this study are: conversion accounts in book of Acts, contemporary trends in conversion in India, factors behind conversion, models of *ecclesia*, and movement of conversion in recent Indian mission history.

The purpose of the dissertation was to accelerate the emerging Christward movement among urban dwellers in North India, specifically Delhi. Data was collected through individual interviews and two focus group discussions with ten leaders of the Christward movement in Delhi, and duly filled open–ended questionnaires from one hundred believers. The methods used in the study were qualitative analysis and ethnography, along with Sensing's multi–method approach in data interpretation. Major lessons from the study were the need for proper *guruship*; focusing on signs and wonders; developing *masihi satsang* instead of "church," promoting Hindu believers in Christ,

which is a renewed identity of believers, and employing sociological factors for

facilitating conversion.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled

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presented by

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CHAPTER 1

NATURE OF THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

The Christward movement among urban dwellers in North India is an emerging phenomenon in Christian ministry. This chapter describes the nature of the project undertaken on this vital topic. Following an autobiographical introduction, the chapter provides a statement of the problem and purpose of the project. The chapter also gives a brief description about the rational for the project along with the research questions. After reviewing the relevant literature, a briefing about data collection and interpretation is included.

Autobiographical Introduction

In 7 July 2008, I reached Dehradun, the capital city of Uttarakhand, one of the North Indian states, with a vision to plant churches, train people, and transform communities. However, the ministry was not easy in North India. Coming from a South Indian state called Kerala, I was quite disappointed about the outcome of the efforts in evangelism and church planting in Dehradun and neighboring places. I read several books and articles written by the people about the resistance to the gospel in North India. While in Dehradnun, I also spoke to many senior ministers about the ministry in North India, and it was quite evident from everyone to whom I talked that it was going to be very difficult to minister in North India.

One day, as one of our teachers visited us at home, he mentioned that there were several openings for the gospel among urban dwellers in North India in the recent past. It was exciting information since I had a vision to plant churches. North India has been very

resistant to the gospel over the years. Urban dwellers especially were not receptive at all. According McGavran, Christian missions did not implement the strategies effectively; there are very few Christians among urban dwellers in North India. In the past, there were church growth movements in India. However, it was primarily a movement among the villagers than to reach out the city people (*Understanding Church* 89). Moreover, the urban dwellers were not open to the gospel at that time.

In India, the modern missions began initially in the cities. However, since there was no response to the gospel, the foreign missionaries shifted their focus of work to the villagers. Thus, the mission activities were all centered among the villagers. Often, there were mission headquarters in the city, but there was no significant work going on in the city. One of the reasons is that the villagers were easier to approach. Urban dwellers, comparatively more educated and upper caste and upper class people, did not show receptivity to the gospel.

The urban population in North India has increased significantly. There are large numbers of people who are migrating to the cities in India. Delhi, the capital of India, attracts people from all over the country. A study revealed that every day, 665 people migrate to Delhi (*Times of India* **7,** August 2006). Urban agglomeration and migration of the people has significantly increased the number of urban dwellers in North India.

While urbanism is growing in North India, and people are more receptive to the gospel, the important question is how to ride the wave of the Christward movement. How can the church get involved in a strategic way? One needs to ask some vital questions, such as, what is Christward movement? What are the contextual factors causing Christward movement among urban dwellers in North India? What are the major needs of

the Christward movement in North India? What are the strategies for accelerating the

Christward movement among urban dwellers in North India? What is an effective

organizational and leadership structure for the Christward movement among urban

dwellers in North India? These questions will help to understand and accelerate

Christward movement.

Accelerating Christward movement is one of the great puzzles that I have in my

life. If a systematic study can be developed, then it would contribute significantly to the

ministry among the urban dwellers in North India in the days to come for the expansion

of the kingdom of God.

Thus, the Christward movement among urban dwellers in North India is a very

recent development. In the past, the movements toward Christianity, though very few,

happened in North India mostly in the villages and tribal areas. Urban areas have always

been resistant to the gospel in the past. However, in the recent past there have been many

claims and reports that a great move toward Christ is happening among the urban

dwellers in North India. In metropolitan Delhi alone, many non–Christians have come to

Christ; and several groups (Worshiping communities) mushroomed in different parts of

Delhi as a result of the movement toward Christ. However, until now, no systematic

study has been done about these movements that it can be accelerated in order to booster

the triumphal march of Christianity among urban dwellers in North India. The South Asia

Institute of Advanced Christian Studies (SAIACS) reports in its news–letter that "[i]n the

recent past there have been claims of exponential growth of Christianity and emergence

of new movements in India, and North India Particular. However, there has been lack of

scientific and in–depth research on these movements" (*SAIACS News–letter* 6). There is

not enough research done on this opportunity. Due to the lack of such research, there are no systematically developed studies that offer strategies and structure for the effective continuity of the movement. No patterns are available to follow, which would enhance the Christward movement. Therefore, proper approach toward the Christward movement is an urgent need, especially in terms of contextually–effective evangelistic strategies and relevant organizational leadership structure to accelerate this movement.

The research was done through interviews, focus groups, and open–ended questionnaires. The empirical field for the research was Delhi, and did not include other cities in North India. It is true that Christward movements are taking place in different cities in North India, but it may not be possible to study all of them in one research project. So, I identified Delhi as the most appropriate place for research. One of the main reasons for selecting Delhi is the fact that the Christward movement is taking place in Delhi in a significant way. Perhaps there may be no other time in history that these many numbers of people are coming to Christ. Moreover, it is the capital city of India and one of the largest metro cities. The strategic importance in terms of politics, economy, power, and influence make Delhi even more significant. It is common in the Indian context that what happens in Delhi is often carried on in other cities. Thus, a study of Delhi can strategically shed light into the reality of other cities in North India.

The variables selected for the study were from two different categories. First of all, field research was done with the identified leaders of Christward movements in Delhi (ten leaders). Secondly, the research was done with members of the Christward movement (one hundred participants). The participants were randomly selected within the geographical location of Delhi.

The study was limited to the urban dwellers in North India. Christward movements are taking place among various segment of population in North India. It is almost impossible to consider all those segments of population in one research of this nature and size. Therefore, the focus is limited to urban dwellers. The reason for selecting this particular segment is that they are more influential than others, and are rapidly increasing in India because of migration.

I employed a multi–method approach in studying the data. It is a pre–intervention study since the purpose of the study was to accelerate the Christward movement among urban dwellers in North India.

Statement of the Problem

The Christward movement among urban dwellers in North India is an emerging phenomenon. In the past, most of the movement toward Christianity happened mainly in the villages and tribal areas. There are many claims and reports that a great move is happening among the urban dwellers in North India. SAIACS reports in its news–letter that "[i]n the recent past there have been claims of exponential growth of Christianity and emergence of new movements in India, and North India Particular. However, there has been lack of scientific and in–depth research on these movements" (*SAIACS News–letter* 6). There is not enough research done on this opportunity. Therefore, there is an un–seized opportunity of conversion among the urban dwellers in North India. The book *Bridges of God* says that

> A Christward movement within a people can be defeated either by extracting the new Christians from their society (i.e. by allowing them to be squeezed out by their non—Christian relatives) or by the non—Christians so dominating the Christians that their new life in Christ is not apparent. An incipient Christward movement can be destroyed by either danger. (31)

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the research was to accelerate the emerging Christward movement among urban dwellers in North India with a special reference to Delhi.

Research Questions

It is true that there is a tremendous movement toward Christ among the urban dwellers in North India. The puzzle for me is how to seize this openness and accelerate this movement? So, the important questions are:

Research Question #1

What are the characteristics of the Christward movement in Delhi?

Research Question #2

What are the factors behind the Christward movement?

Research Question #3

What needs to be done to seize the opportunity of openness to Christ and accelerate this movement?

Rationale for the Project

There are different rationales behind this project. The first reason for this project was that the movement toward Christ among urban dwellers is not often brought to the front line in the studies. In most cases these movements are carried out by the ordinary people or informal way. Moreover, such movements are happening among the non–traditional and non–institutional Christianity or church. Since these movements are not part of the existing Christian framework, no systematic study is done on them. This research contributed to the study of this movement in a significant way since there is no in–depth study done on this movement.

The second reason for this research was that it was one of the few studies on urban missions in the North Indian context. The focus areas for missions in North India were rural areas and villages. It was a common understanding or a myth among the mission thinkers and practitioners in North India that the urban population was not open to the gospel. The movements toward Christ in North Indian cities points out the need for a paradigm shift in the focus of mission from rural areas to cities, and villagers to urban dwellers. Therefore, the research made a significant contribution to the mission work in North India.

The third reason for this research was that since the Christward movement began from the periphery, it seems to be different from the traditional mainline Christianity. The lives of converts are not in conformity with Christians in India. They maintain a unique identity as converts to Christ, not necessarily to the Indian Christianity. There are different trends among the converts, like they believe in Christ but do not belong to a church officially in a traditional way. Often, the converts develop their own expressions of "being church" in the Indian context. In such a context, this study provided a systematic and biblical approach to believers in Christ and "being church" in India.

The fourth reason for the research was that it was the time of receptivity for the gospel among urban dwellers in North India. The church growth research has proved that God works among a particular group of people in a particular time in a very unique way leading to conversion among them in a significant way. The work of Bishop J. W. Pickett, *Mass Movements in India* and McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, on the Indian mission field shows that after a period of resistance to the gospel, people open up for the gospel. This openness to the gospel is identified as a period of receptivity or

harvest in mission studies. Such receptivity lasts a specific period of time and then slowly comes to an end. This research will discuss different aspects of conversion, and then will explore ways to consolidate conversion in a contextual way. Since it is the time of receptivity, this study on movement toward Christ among the urban dwellers in North India is very important.

The fifth reason for this study was that it made suggestions for accelerating Christward movements among urban dwellers in North India, and to strategically use this movement to benefit the mission work in North India as a whole. There are several challenges and needs for these movements. At times there is no sufficient guidance, resources, training, and assistance to accelerate such movements. This research helped to accelerate the Christward movements among urban dwellers so that many people would turn to Christ. This research dealt with the issues that the movement is facing, as well as proposed ways to establish the Christward movement in a systematic way in the Indian context.

The sixth reason for this project was that it helped my ministry and my organization in the church–planting ministry in North India, especially in cities in North India. The focus is in planting, building, and reproducing churches in North India. Since I am personally involved in church planting and training, and multiplying churches in North Indian cities, the project helped me, the organization, and others who are involved in missions in urban areas in North India.

Definition of Key Terms

Urban dwellers: Urban dwellers are the people who live in the city, including those who have migrated to the city. It also incorporates the neighborhood of the city because of extensive urban agglomeration.

Christward movement: People are turning to Christ from non–Christian background. Conversion may not be in the structure and framework of traditional Christianity in India. Christward movement primarily refers to the openness among the people to accept Jesus, leaving their old gods and goddesses and coming together in various places (it can be a home, rented building, or a church) for corporate worship as the body of Christ.

Hindu/Sikh believers in Christ: This refers to those who accepted Christ in their lives and have begun to live as a believer in Jesus. At the same time, they also keep their previous religious identity, whether as Hindu or Sikh in the society. Their legal and cultural standards continue with their old identity, along with their newfound faith in Christ. They may participate in all the religious activities in their society without worshiping gods and goddesses.

Delimitations

This research was limited to study the emerging Christward movement in cities in North India. History of missions in India records several movements to Christ among various groups of people at various times. Historical mass movements and people movements among the villagers in India are examples of it. Movements of conversion are also evident among the tribal communities in India. Apart from this, significant numbers

of conversion took place among various communities in South India. However, this research was exclusively limited to the conversion to Christ among urban dwellers today.

This research was also limited to the city of Delhi. Though there are several cities in North India that are experiencing conversion to Christ in a significant way, the geographical location of this research is Delhi. The major reason for using Delhi for the study is that it is the capital city of India, and it is also one of the most populated cities in India. Moreover, significant amount of conversion to Christ is happening in Delhi.

Though there are few conversions taking place in mainline churches in Delhi, the study was limited to the conversion outside the mainline churches. There are few established, institutionalized, and mainline churches in Delhi. These churches normally have people who have been Christians for generations. On the other hand, there are several incidents of conversion in Delhi where people accept Christ outside the institutional churches. Most of them continue to remain outside the mainline churches, and have various views on conversion and living as a church in their context. The praxis of *ecclesia* in this movement is from the simple fellowship groups to the emerging churches, which initially began as fellowship groups and later grew similar to an institutional established church. The study did not include mainline institutionalized churches in Delhi.

Review of Relevant Literature

This research included literature from various disciplines. One of the major areas was the biblical foundation for mission. Apart from the material from biblical studies, writers in the field of biblical theology of mission, like Roger E. Hedlund and Stanley Jones, were depended in this section. They discuss the accounts of conversion to Christ in

the Bible in their writings. In the area of theological foundation, various topics are considered. One of the major sections was about conversion. It discussed various types of conversion in the Indian context, and then discussed emerging trends in conversion in India. Writers like Jones, Wingate, Hiebert, and McGavran were depended for this section of the study. The research also included a section on power evangelism, which was discussed by authors like Wimber and Wagner. Authors on the Indian Urban Sociology also contributed significantly in writing this research. Authors like Kaldate and Kumar are prominent writers on Indian sociology. Another major section is ecclesiology of Indian churches. The three models of congregation were consulted, which in turn contributed to develop a model for *ecclesia* for Christward movement such as the *satsang* model, missionary congregations, and house churches. Jongelneel and Van Enguen discussed the missionary congregation model in their book. The house church model is predominantly drawn from the writings of Simpson. Various movements of conversion in India in the past were also considered from authors like Pickett, McPhee, McGavran, and Garrison.

Data Collection Method

The study on the Christward movement in Delhi in North India was carried out through empirical research. Since there is no research or systematic study on the Christward movement in North Indian cities, field research was the best way to gather information. Moreover, the empirical study provided an opportunity to collect information first–hand. There is more room for accuracy and objectivity in the empirical study.

I used interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires to collect data for the research. The interviews were done with leaders of various Christward movements in Delhi. In order to be selected for the study, they had to lead one or more groups of people following Christ from other religious tradition. These leaders were selected on the basis of their ministry experience, number of people they are leading, their own religious background and community to whom they are ministering, and their ethnic and social background. These leaders were individually interviewed initially, and later they were invited to join a focus group discussion. So, leaders had to attend two sessions of conversation while collecting the data.

Participants

The participants of the field research were ten identified leaders of Christward movements in Delhi and their believers. The interviews and focus group discussions were done with these leaders. The interviews with these leaders were conducted either in their office or home according to their convenience. Two focus group discussions were arranged for these leaders.

Questionnaires (one hundred) were distributed to the believers who were part of the movement led by the selected leaders. One of the major reasons was that these groups represented diversity since leaders were selected on the groups that they led. This helped to obtain data from a wider background. Moreover, when the leaders and believers are from the same movements, it sheds light in the analysis of the data, especially in bringing out the similarities and differences in the views of the leaders and believers. Emphasis was given to include people from various age groups, ethnicity, family status, education, and social status in Delhi. The size of the group was also a criterion in selecting the

participants. More questionnaires were distributed to larger groups. The average ratio was 1:20. One participant was randomly selected from every 20 persons. It helped in obtaining a balanced data from the field.

Type of Research

This study employed a qualitative approach. It was a pre–intervention study because I wanted to explore an approach to accelerate the Christward movement in Delhi. There was no study previously undertaken to prove that there is a movement to Christ in spite of several reports on such movements. As a pre–intervention, this study systematically documented the Christward movement in Delhi, and also proposed some ways to accelerate the movement.

Data Collection

The data was collected through a one–on–one interview with leaders of the Christward movement. These leaders also participated in the focus group discussions apart from the interview. I used digital voice recording equipment for the interview and focus group discussions. I carried it with me and recorded the interview and focus group discussions from beginning to end.

I also used two–page questionnaires for collecting data from the believers in the Christward movement. One hundred questionnaires were distributed to the believers to collect the information. The participants were expected fill in the answers to all the questions objectively.

I used non–English speaking people also for the interview and questionnaire. Some of the selected leaders and members of the Christward movement were able to speak English; however, all of them in Delhi spoke Hindi, the national language of India.

Interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in Hindi whenever it was needed. Questionnaires were translated into Hindi.

Data Analysis

The transcripts from the interview and focus group discussions were used to analyze the data. Repeated words and phrases in the interview and discussions were given special attention in interpretation. Same or similar views expressed by multiple people were also a major factor in interpretation. Answers to the questions in the individual interviews and focus group discussions were also identified in the analysis. Since some of the participants needed questionnaires in Hindi, the data were translated to English before they were employed in the research. The number of specific answers in questionnaires was a major criterion to analyze data collected through them. I used graphs, tables, and diagrams to analyze data.

Generalizability

Anyone can do a study on the Christward movement. In my knowledge, so far no research was undertaken on the Christward movement in the city of Delhi. However, if any person desires to do a similar study on Delhi as well, this research will hopefully be of use to him or her. Moreover, if anyone wants to find out about the Christward movement in any other cities in India, then it will be a guide to him or her.

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Overview of Dissertation

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This dissertation included five chapters. In Chapter 2, the Literature Review of the project is given where the biblical and theological foundation for the Christward movement is discussed. Chapter 3 is an analytical framework of the project where research questions, ministry context, participants, and collection and analysis of data, as

well as the reliability and validity of project design are discussed. Chapter 4 is the

evidence of the project and summary of the major findings. Chapter 5 is the learning

report and major findings of the project and its ministry implications, along with a

description on limitations, unexpected observations, and future directions of the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter discusses the biblical and theological foundations for the Christward movement. In the biblical foundation section, the chapter gives a word study of conversion in the Old Testament, and then focuses on a case study of the conversion of Nineveh. The New Testament foundation provides a word study on conversion, and then considers the Jesus movement in the gospels and conversion movement in the book of Acts in various cities. Following this, the chapter attempts to develop a theological foundation for the Christward movement. This section is divided into two major parts, such as the theology of conversion in an Indian context, and being the church or *ecclesia* in the Indian context.

Description of Literature Surveyed

This chapter covers literature from various fields such as Bible commentaries, theology of mission, the New Testament world, Gospels, book of Acts, and mission in the first century. Apart from these, the chapter also includes the survey of literature on conversion in Indian context, church growth, mass movement, urbanization in India, power evangelism, missions, house church, etc.

Biblical Foundations

This section of the chapter will consider some movement toward Christ in the Bible. Though God is building a nation for himself from the first book of Bible, in the real sense of the word, a clear movement to Christ is evident only from the book of Acts.

However, in the initial part of this section, the Old Testament foundation for Christward movement is described following a section on the New Testament foundation.

Conversion in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, the term "conversion" is largely dealing with the people of God, though there are occasional accounts in the Old Testament that refer to the repentance of Gentiles and their turning to Yahweh. The Hebrew word used for conversion is *shub.* It is a verb that commonly means "to turn," denoting a tuning to God or returning to God. According to Barry L. Ross, the term "conversion" is used only three times in the Old Testament, in Psalms 19:7, 51:13 and Isaiah 6:10. This is also a translation of the word *shub* (1)*.* Isaiah 45:20–25 refers to the universal call of God to salvation. The historical context reveals that the passage refers to refugees of the nations in verse 20. King Cyrus and his army defeated the Babylonians who desired to find hope in idols. Isaiah says they pray to a god that cannot save. In this situation, in verse 22, through the prophet Isaiah, God calls people "to turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other." The idolatrous person has no knowledge. It is a universal call to the nations of the earth to come to the salvation of God. So, in the Old Testament, conversion means turning to God; both the people of God and nations are called to turn to him.

Nineveh: A Case Study

Jonah's ministry in Nineveh was an example of a group conversion movement to Yahweh. Nineveh is a special case of "group conversion" (Hedlund, *God and the Nations* 133). Here the focus is on Jonah, the religion and culture of Nineveh, and conversion of Nineveh.

The prophet Jonah. Jonah was the son of Amittai of Gath–hepher. He prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II (2 Kings 14:25) along with his contemporaries, Hosea and Amos. Contrary to other prophets, Jonah was commissioned by God to proclaim the message of Yahweh to Nineveh (Jon. 1:1–2). Jonah was unwilling to go to Nineveh, and rebelliously went to Tarshish. Later in trouble, he prayed to the Lord for mercy and God commanded the fish to vomit him out in Nineveh.

The main reason for the unwillingness of Jonah was that the people of Nineveh were cruel and fearsome. Jonah was concerned about how they would respond to him as a prophet of Yahweh. Another reason was Jonah's patriotism. Jonah was an ethnocentric prophet. Assyria was perceived as an enemy, so he wanted Nineveh to be destroyed. Thus, he proclaimed a message of destruction (Jon. 3:4). After the proclamation, Jonah sat in a suburb of the city of Nineveh. Newbigin says "Jonah sitting on the edge waiting to see what will happen, caring more about himself than about the fate of the city" (237). In fact, Jonah was not really expecting God to save the Ninevites; yet God, out of his love, intervenes for the salvation of the people of Nineveh.

Culture of Nineveh. Jonah had to preach in the context of the culture of the people in Nineveh. Jonah 1:2 and 3:2 says that Nineveh was a great city. Hedlund says that "[i]ts greatness consisted not only in its size, but also in its position in ancient civilization" (132). Nineveh was the capital of Assyria and center of Assyrian culture. Being a great city, the wickedness of Nineveh was notorious (Jon. 1:2). Nineveh had a perverted culture, which was corrupted by human society.

Conversion of Nineveh. The city of Nineveh, which was full of wickedness, is the object of Jonah's preaching. The entire population of Nineveh, including the officials,

repented of their sins and received forgiveness (Jon. 3:5–8). Spiritually, they were reconciled to God, and he regretted about the upcoming judgment upon the people. Their conversion also resulted in a social transformation (Jon. 3:10). This led to the transformation of all the people of the city, and thus gave hope to the city. God was at work in Nineveh bringing social, moral, and spiritual transformation, though Jonah was unaware about it and was not joyful in the conversion of the Ninevites. God offered redemption to depraved humanity in the city of Nineveh.

The conversion of the Ninevites points to the prominent theme of the universality of God's salvific plan in the Old Testament. God's love and mercy is extended toward people outside the Jewish covenant (Jon. 4:11). Newbegin says that the pagan rulers and people of the wicked city repent and turn to the Lord at the first invitation (167). Jonah was a missionary prophet to the Ninevites so that God would show his compassion on the people. The conversion of the Ninevites also shows the significance of grace in the salvation of the people. The mission makes God's grace available to the Gentiles. Thus, in the Old Testament, conversion is understood as people turning to Yahweh. The conversion of the Ninevites is an example of mass conversion and turning to Yahweh, though it did not make a lasting transformation. The city was destroyed later due to the wickedness of the Ninevites.

Conversion in the New Testament

There are three different words in the New Testament connected to conversion, such as *metanoein, metanoia,* and *epistrophe.* The word *metanoia* means change of one's mind. It is about inward change, and thus religious conversion becomes inward change of the heart. The noun *epistrophe* occurs only once in Acts 15:3 where Paul and Barnabas

report the conversion of the Gentiles in the Jerusalem council. However, the verb

epistrepho is used several times in the New Testament. The figurative use of the verb

concerns moral and religious acts indicating a change of mind or course of action for

better or worse–John the Baptist turning the hearts of the fathers to their children and to

righteousness (Luke 1:17), and believers turning a sinner from the error of his ways (Jas.

5:20). The figurative use of the verb more frequently concerns a change in the sinner's

relation to God, e.g., turning to the Lord (Acts 9:35, 11:21, 26:20; 2 Cor. 3:16), turning to

God from idols (1 Thess. 1:9), turning from worthless things to the living God (Acts

14:15) and turning from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God (Acts

26:18). Looking at the usage of the verb, Ian S. Kemp says that conversion involves

twofold turning both from and to–from idolatry, sin, and the rule of Satan, and turning to

Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 2:25), to worshiping, and serving the true God (Acts 14:15, 26:18; 1

Thess. 1:9) (11). So, conversion includes repentance from sin and faith in Christ. First

Corinthians 1:26 refers to conversion as the act of God's call upon those who were

nothing in the eyes of the world, enabling them to respond to his call, followed by

empowerment to work with him for his kingdom. The following part focuses on the

gospels, as well as the book of Acts, to understand conversion movements in the New

Testament.

People Turning to Jesus in Gospels

The ministry of Jesus begins with a call to conversion: "Repent, for the Kingdom

of God is at hand" (Matt. 3:2). The word used in Greek here is *metanoeite.* It means Jesus

was calling for a conversion of the mind, which leads to a totally new view of life.

According to Jesus, conversion is not the same with proselytism.

Jesus repudiated proselytism which is the changing from one group to another group without any necessary change in character and life…. Jesus called proselytism a change downward. Ye make him (the proselytes) twofold more the child of hell than yourself (Jones, *Conversion* 36).

In the gospels, we find different people following Jesus in different ways according to their context.

Gentile followers of Jesus. Jesus obviously included Gentiles in his ministry. Though at times he confined his ministry to the Jews alone, he did not absolutely exclude the Gentiles. Jesus' first sermon in Nazareth with its Gentile references demonstrates that his life's purpose extended far beyond the nation of Israel (Hedlund 219). There are several instances where Gentiles either followed Jesus or showed their faith in Jesus in the gospels. Jesus at times stayed in Gentile territories (Mark 3:8, 5:1, 20, 7:24, 31, 10:1; Matt. 8:28). Jesus came in contact with Gentiles in Galilee and Judea. The healing of the centurion's servant shows that Jesus' ministry extends to Gentiles (Matt. 8:5–13; Luke 7:1–10). At times, Gentiles turned to Jesus for help (Matt. 8:5–13; Mark 7:24–30) and he helped them. Hedlund says that "[t]hough Jesus came as a Jew; he did not share the usual prejudices of the Jews of his day. Jesus took the vision of a remote conversion of non–Jews and made it a present possibility" (220). Thus, as seen in the gospels, the Gentiles followed Jesus.

Samaritans believing in Jesus. Many Samaritans also followed Jesus. Samaritan believers did not join the Jewish community but remained in their own communities, retaining their Samaritan identity, and their existing worship forms.

After their conversion recorded in John 4, they worshipped in spirit and in truth. But they did so in Samaria (in their prior place of worship) just as Jesus worshipped the Father in spirit and in truth in Jerusalem, in the Temple. The believing but 'young' community Jesus leaves behind after only two days will

presumably continue in its prior Samaritan religious life with a major difference: Jesus' revelation of Himself has changed them (Hedlund 228).

Disciples of Jesus. There were seventy two disciples who followed Jesus apart from the twelve disciples (Luke 10:1). The first two disciples of Jesus were those who followed him on the exclaiming of John the Baptist, "Look, the Lamb of God" (Jn. 1:29). One of them is Andrew (Jn. 1:37–39), while the other was presumably John. At Capernaum, more fishermen turned as disciples and joined Jesus, such as Simon (Peter) along with James and John, sons of Zebedee. Then Jesus called Levi-Matthew, the tax collector. In John 1:51, Jesus calls Philip and Nathaniel (Bartholomew). The others were Thomas, the twin; James, the son of Alphaeus; Jude (Thaddeus); Simon the Zealot; Judas Iscariot; and Matthew. The most amazing thing about the call of the disciples is that at a single word, "come," they left all and immediately went after him (Thomas 101). They followed Jesus as they were and lived with him.

Secret followers of Christ. There were those who were following Jesus in secret, such as Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1–10), Nicodemus (Jn. 3:1ff, 19:39), and Joseph of Arimathea (Mark 15:43; Luke 23: 50) who went to Pilate for permission to take the body of Christ from the cross. While Zacchaeus declared himself as a follower of Jesus, others continued to remain as secret believers in Christ. There were also some families and women who followed Christ.

Movements to Christ in the Book of Acts

The book of Acts records various conversion movements to Christ in various cities in the first century. The following section will describe some of them.

Conversion movement in Jerusalem: Acts 2:1–6:7. Jerusalem was an ancient city built on a hill surrounded by many hills. During the New Testament period, the city

was part of the province of Judea under the Roman rule. It was the religious center for the

Jews. Jerusalem was the religious capital of the world, especially for the Jews (Hastey

147). Jews came to the city as pilgrims during the important religious festivals.

The New Testament church began in this city. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit

came upon the disciples with the supernatural signs of wind, fire, and tongues (Acts 2:2–

4). Robert P. Menzies calls them "heavenly signs" (176). People, especially Jews, who

had come to Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost from the various parts of the world were

attracted by the signs. Peter delivered his first sermon to this crowd. As a result of the

sermon that accompanied the signs, three thousand members joined the church (Acts

2:14–41). The apostles continued to preach publicly in the temple court, and it resulted in

the conversion of many people in the city (Acts 3:11; 5:12, 20–21). Other than the signs

on the day of Pentecost, the apostles also performed many signs and wonders in

Jerusalem (Acts 2:43; 5:12). The healing of the lame man at the temple Gate called

Beautiful by Peter and John, and Peter's sermon following that in Solomon's colonnade,

caused so many people to accept Christ that the number of the male believers alone

became five thousand (Acts 4:4). Divine healing was an integral part of evangelism and

conversion. God, at times, acted in his sovereign power. Healing becomes demonstration

of the power of God. Healing reveals that power evangelism brought people to Christ.

The Jerusalem Church continued to grow in the city as people met together in the homes

of the believers; though they often assembled together in the public places too (Acts 2:46;

5:12, 42).

Christward movement in Samaria. Samaria was the religious capital city of the

Northern kingdom of Israel, built by the king of Israel named Omri (1 Kings 16:24). By

the New Testament time, the city had grown significantly and was renamed as Sebaste.

The believers who were scattered by the persecution preached the gospel in Samaria

(Acts 8:1). Signs and wonders were manifested in Samaria through the ministry of Philip;

and as a result, several people believed and were baptized (Acts 8:4–13). Philip's

Samaritan ministry also included a power encounter. Simon was a sorcerer in the city

who was controlling the people with his magic. Philip's ministry encountered Simon's

hold upon the people, and they believed in Philip's preaching instead of following Simon

(Acts 8:11–13). Warner states that "[t]he signs and wonders that accompanied Philip's

preaching powerfully counteracted the hold which Simon Magus had upon the

inhabitants of the city of Samaria" (65). The movement was a result of lay preaching and

power evangelism.

Christward movement in Lydda. Lydda was a small town in the territory of

Judea. It was the administrative center of a district, so it had some importance in the New

Testament world. The church existed in Lydda prior to Peter's visit. In fact, he went to

visit saints there (Acts 9:32). In Lydda, Peter healed Aeneas, who was paralyzed, and

consequently, a large number of people turned to the Lord (Acts 9:33–35). All who lived

in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord. This miracle had a great impact for

the advance of the church (Larkin 151). McGavran says that in this movement, the entire

community becomes Christian (*Understanding Church Growth* 241). The movement to

Christ in the city was a result of healing and power evangelism.

Christward movement in Antioch of Syria. Antioch was an ancient but important city. It was the capital of the province of Syria with a large population. Longenecker refers to it as the third largest city in the empire (399). It was a cosmopolitan city and had many Jews in it.

The church was started in Antioch through the witness of the believers who were scattered by the persecution (Acts 12:19). These believers shared the gospel to the people in Antioch. Though the gospel was initially proclaimed only to the Jews, later Gentiles also became the focus of evangelization (Acts 12:19–20). As a result, many people turned to God (Acts 12:21). The church and church leaders were established. Bruce comments that the enterprises met with instant success (225).

Christward movement in Lystra: Acts 14:19–20. Lystra was politically a strategic city in the province of Galatia, and was founded to control the mountain tribes in the province. It was a colony of the Roman Empire.

The church was planted and grew through a healing of a crippled man (Acts 14:8–10) followed by the public preaching of the gospel (Acts 14:14). The preaching won some disciples in Lystra (Acts 14:20). Larkin calls the disciples "Lystran believers" (214). The preaching also aroused opposition in Lystra. McGavran says that some became Christian, while others turned to be hostile and opposed the Christian faith (*Understanding Church Growth* 242). However, the church continued to grow so much that on their return to Antioch, Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in the church (Acts 14:23). In the second missionary journey, Paul visited the city and met brothers, including Timothy (Acts 16:1, 5).

Christward movement in Philippi. The city of Philippi was an important city in the province of Macedonia. It was a Roman colony and a commercial center. The city was named after Philip II.

In Philippi, Paul shared the gospel to a group of women who had gathered for worship of God and prayer at the riverbank. When there were only less than ten Jewish men, they could not start a synagogue. In such places, the Jewish women used to go a riverbank for prayer. Often the God–fearing women joined them. Paul's preaching resulted in the conversion of Lydia, who was a migrant from the city of Thyatira and was doing the business of purple cloth (Acts 13:14). Later she and her household were converted and were baptized (Acts 16:15). A church was formed in her house. From such a small beginning, the church at Philippi began and flourished (Longenecker 461). Paul's dealing with the demon–possessed slave girl eventually brought further opportunities for the gospel in Philippi (Acts 16:16–34). Warner states that "an incident involving a demon possessed slave girl opened up the city of Philippi to the missionaries" (139). The conversion of the household of the jailer was an indirect result of the event. Thus, conversion of people to Christ took place in the city through group prayer, exorcism, or power evangelism.

Christward movement in Ephesus. Ephesus was an important and free city in the province of Asia. It was an ancient city and was famous for magic. It had a large number of Jews living in it.

The church began in Ephesus with Paul's corrective speech to the twelve disciples who had received the baptism of John (Acts 19:3). They received the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:5, 6). McGavran says that

> [a]n Ephesian movement is an irregular form of the church that emerges among those who are truly drawn by the Holy Spirit to follow Jesus, but begin to do so on the basis of incomplete or even at times somewhat twisted information about Christianity. Autonomous churches arise that to the traditional churches may seem to have grace deficiencies. McGavran further continues that we may confidently expect many more of these in the future (*Understanding Church Growth* 243).

Paul also went to the synagogue and preached the gospel for three months. Later, due to the opposition from the Jews, he moved to the lecture hall of Tyrannus along with the disciples. Many people came to the Lord leaving the magical powers as they witnessed the miracles of healing and exorcism along with the word of the Lord. The power of God was demonstrated as the supreme power over the magical powers of the Ephesus. The Church was established in Ephesus and there were elders, overseers, and shepherds in the Church (Acts 21:17, 28).

There were also many converts to Christ in various cities and towns, such as in Damascus (Acts 9:18–19, 25), Joppa (Acts 9:37, 42), Paphos in Cyprus (Acts 13:6–12), Iconium (Acts 14:1–23), Berea (Acts 17:12), Corinth (Acts 18:4–8), and Rome (Acts 28:17–28). In all these places, people accepted Christ and lived as a community of faith, leaving their old faith traditions and following the teachings of the apostles.

The discussion above reveals that the theme of conversion to God is vivid both in the Old Testament and New Testament. In the book of Acts, it is very explicit that as the gospel penetrated in the lives of the people, they began to believe in Jesus and lived as a faith community or *ecclesia*.

Theological Foundations

There are two major aspects to consider while developing a theological foundation for the Christward movement in North Indian cities. The first part of the

theological foundation discusses the phenomena of people coming to Christ in India. The second part discusses the life of converts as a community of faith, which means being the church in the Indian context.

Toward a Theology of Conversion

Conversion is change in the basic meaning of the term. There are different types of conversion, such as cultural conversion, social conversion, economic conversion, and religious conversion. In this study, the term conversion refers to religious conversion, and in particular, people from other religions accepting Christ in their lives and committing their lives to live according to the teachings of the Bible.

Understanding Conversion: An Overview

The Encyclopedia Britannica defines conversion as "to turn or change, a general term for the operation of converting, changing, or transposing used in a special sense in logic, theology and law" (678). Therefore, conversion is a multifaceted process of religious change. In the Indian context, the term "conversion" is understood in different ways over the years. Most commonly it is understood as a transfer of faith and allegiance from one religion to another, involving conflict and hostility between religions. Conversion is the formal act of identifying oneself with a religious faith, which has a set of values, attitudes, beliefs, and practices other than those originally adhered to. It is a conscious moving from one organized religion to another (Gordon 236–38). Conversion includes a psychological process, social process, ecclesiological process, and theological process. In many cases, the converts go through lots of difficult experiences following the conversion. According to Krailsheimer, conversion normally follows a period of emotional confusion and disturbance, often but not always, accompanied by intellectual

doubts. Often there have been difficult family circumstances and a sense of loneliness and isolation, even amongst friends (37).

According to Christian understanding, conversion is acceptance of Christ in one's life. It is a gift from God, but there is a point of commitment made by the convert as a human response. In the gospels, conversion is to repent and believe in the good news of Christ. It means that once Christ has come in one's life, there is a human response that demands to go in the direction of the gospel. Conversion is a reaction in which Christ is central (Jones 45). Conversion is often understood in Christianity as new birth. According to John 1:12, conversion happens "not of the blood." New birth does not come through the blood stream. Christian parents cannot give a conversion experience to their children, though they may give a Christian name. Being born in a Christian home does not make someone a Christian. John 1:12 also says that new birth does not come "through the will of flesh." No one can find God through any human effort; rather, it is God who came in search of man in Jesus. New birth does not also come through the "the will of man." No missionary or pastor can bring conversion in a man. Conversion comes directly from God.

Conversion is also understood as a matter of relationship with God. It is not merely a change of religion, but rather is it a beginning of an ongoing relationship with the Triune God. God's highest priority is to bring men and women into a living relationship to Jesus Christ (McGavran 20). It is not changing the religion of people; rather, it is transformation of heart through a fresh relationship with God. After the conversion, most of the converts experience significant changes in life. They leave bad habits, treat everyone with love and respect, and develop a deeper devotional life, such as

prayer, worship, bible reading, etc. They also experience a special joy, courage, and peace in Christ. The converts also go through the change in their belief system. They start find meaning in the new Christian faith. There is a significant change or discontinuity in their relationship to the previous religion and culture.

The converts have a fresh understanding of Christian faith and church. While people convert, they experience the gospel, church, and culture as dynamically related.

> Culture affects how converts receive the gospel, as they make it their own. The gospel also stands above aspects of their culture, as they seek to live within it…. Their presence changes the church, as well as themselves. It is necessary to consider alternative ways of being church, coming out of Indian context and what such has to say in challenging the whole concept of church (Wingate 4).

It is clear that gospel and church go through the dynamics of culture, while both make impacts on one another. The gospel preached is heard in the context of the culture of the people. The church is understood, practiced, and defined in the context of the culture leading to the existence and expression of church in the new cultural context. This necessitates a contextual theological framework for church in the context of people who are accepting Christ in North Indian cities, which is discussed later in this chapter.

Types of Conversion

In the context of India, conversions have happened in different levels such as group conversions, conversion through organized prayer groups, and individual conversion.

Group Conversions

In India, people have become Christians in the past in large groups. Mass movements and people movements are examples of large number of people accepting Christ together. In this case, sometimes a whole village or town accepts Christ. Many of

the group conversions have proven successful over the decades in India. McPhee says the ancient Syrian Church of South India came from a strong mass movement (84). Emancipation from social oppression, miraculous healing from a terrible sickness through prayer, conversion of the leader of the community to Christ, a supernatural experience, heavenly vision or dreams, and exorcisms, etc. have been the common factors for groups conversion. In most cases, the group conversions were followed by the formation of the church where the converts received post–baptismal care and teaching. These converts were the leaders of this church and often had a locally–developed church structure and function. On many group conversion accounts in the past, the believers also gained from the social and economic development activities which church conducted in that local area such as a Christian school, hostel, small scale production, etc.

Conversion through Organized Prayer Groups

This type of conversion refers to the account of conversion in response to the congregational witness. It is very common in India that people accept Christ as they attend a prayer group arranged in a house, common place, under a tree, in a college campus, in prison, in a coffee shop, or a work place. Though these groups function as a closed group, it is open for visitors. Once a person begins to attend the prayer group, most often he or she accepts Christ over a period of time. The factors leading to conversion are *koinonia* in the group, sound teaching, follow–up and care, lay leadership, slow and personal experience of conversion, sharing joy and peace of Christian life, and no-Christian stigma attached to the prayer groups. There are many effective prayer groups, which have led people to Christ over a period of time.

Individual Conversion

A person hears the gospel from a Christian friend, a Christian teacher, or a Christian neighbor, and consequently decides to follow Christ either immediately or over a period of time. Several factors leads to individual conversion, such as motivation from a pastor or believer, life of a church, the fellowship experienced, invitation by a Christian friend for a meeting, tracts, bible verse, personal supernatural experience such as a dream, healing, and social help. It is a one–to–one approach. This would often invite opposition since only one person from the family or village is converted. In Indian Hindu context, individuals are expected to show their devotion to one particular family deity. The family members become upset when the person is not joining in the worship of the family deity, and the individual convert also finds it difficult to leave the family deity. "Identity with a particular deity was a mark of personal devotion to family and caste solidarity" (Wingate 131). In the Indian context, since religion is not a private affair, individual conversion significantly affects family relation. Yet, the converts mostly experience a deeper spiritual life and find greater joy and peace that Christ offers to them as meaningful in life. They also remain faithful in their commitment to Christ. However, some of them remain secret believers, while others openly express their faith in Christ. Some of the issues that they are facing are opposition, loneliness, and events in the life cycle such as marriage, birth, and death. If special care is not given, these issues would pull them away from the Christian faith to their old religion.

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Factors Leading to Conversion in Indian Context

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Though I have mentioned about various types of conversions and the factors behind each type in general in the above section, a detailed description of factors leading

to conversion in general in cities in North India is given here. Historically, the factors leading to conversion to Christ in cities in North India can be divided into two categories such as factors from below, and factors from above. These can be expressed in other words as social reasons and spiritual reasons, earthly reasons and heavenly reasons, natural reasons and supernatural reasons, and human reasons and divine reasons. These factors are discussed in the following part.

Factors from Below

People have accepted Christ in India because they found it helpful to meet the struggles in life and empowered them to overcome the challenges from society. For example, many people became Christians for the material benefits that they received by becoming Christian. Some of them accepted Christ because it gave them a new identity in life and helped to get rid of the caste stigma that was attached to their life. However, over the years, the situation has changed, especially in cities. Many social elements lead people to accept Christ. Various sociological factors contributing to the Christward movement in North Indian cities are discussed in the following section.

Urbanization. Roger S. Greenway and Timothy M. Monsma define, "Urbanization is a process by which, in a particular country or region, the percentage of the people living in cities increases relative to the rural population with consequent effects on human life" (13). The above definition indicates that urbanization is primarily a process of change, especially in relation to the move of the people from rural areas to the urban areas with its effect on the various aspects of life in the society. Therefore, urbanization can be defined as a process of change of place in the life of people, particularly from rural to urban places, which brings a transforming effect on the life of

people in the society. Urbanization, as a process of change in life, opens the people for changes. When the people are open to change they are, supposedly, more open to the gospel.

Migration. Though migration is an important aspect of urbanization, it plays a vital role in the conversion of people in cities. Therefore, it is discussed as a separate factor here. Migration is the geographical move of the people from one place to another. In the context of increasing urbanization of India, people migrate to cities. Though people migrate from town to cities, and cities to cities in India, primarily migration in the Indian cities is rural to urban migration. "A discussion of urbanization in India is fundamentally a discussion of net rural–to–urban migration" (Bogue and Zachariah 27). The migrants in the city are exposed to several beliefs, concepts, and values, which are unfamiliar to them. They confront these new elements in the city every day and become more open to the change. Once they are opened to new beliefs and values, they are supposedly more open to the gospel. When these comparatively open migrants are reached with the gospel, they accept Christ into their lives.

Changing family structure in cities. The shapes of the families are changing from the joint family pattern to nuclear family pattern in the urban areas. "But today in India, there is one particular notion of family … this dominant model of the family is the heterosexual nuclear family made of man, his wife and their, preferably two children" (Radhakrishan, 43, 52–64). Aghamkar agrees, "One of the most visible impacts of urbanization is the trend from the traditional to nuclear families." (51). Kaldate argues that in the process of social disorganization, the family organization tends to change from the large or joint family system to the small family system (173–75). There is a

tremendous move toward the nuclear family in urban India. This structural change in family has impacted the decision–making and kinship relationship in the families. Traditionally, the elderly male member of the family made all the major decisions, and the other family members were expected to obey it. Today, due to the move toward the nuclear families, the decisions are often made within the immediate family members. Sometimes, even individual members are given freedom to make decisions. The kinship relations are also altered in nuclear families. The nuclear families tend to be more individualistic and the emphasis on the kinship is diminishing. The busyness and pressures of the urban life cause several limitations in the kinship relationships. For example, the modern family witnesses a continuous decrease in the importance of blood relationships (Kumar 105). These changes in a family system in urban India are also reflected in the religious matters. The importance of a family god or goddess is decreasing as the whole family system is being disintegrated. Nuclear families get more power to decide over religious matters. The involvement of extended family members are reduced consequently when someone is attracted by the gospel there is comparatively less interventions from the relatives. All these changes contribute to Christward movement in cities in one way or another.

Aspiration for emancipation from caste system. In the cities, the caste discriminations are decreasing. Traditionally, in India, caste determined the job of the person according to his or her caste. However, today in the cities, due to educational qualification and skill, individuals from lower caste are also able to get higher–level jobs. In examining the social status of a person in urban context, W. S. K. Philips denotes that "an individual possesses two sets of statuses– an ascribed 'relatively fixed status' and an

achieved 'relatively flexible status" (84). Caste determines the relatively fixed status, whereas the mobility brought by the urbanization enables to gain the relatively flexible status. The eligible and qualified people are given the job opportunities despite of the caste background, and it accelerated the escalation of statuses. The occupational discrimination on the basis of caste is being eliminated today. In the area of caste structure and occupational mobility, there is greater mobility in the younger generation (Rao 71). The younger generation in the city overcomes the caste restrictions by the materialistic gains. This economic independence gives them more freedom in decision–making. Once a person from a lower caste moves high in the relatively flexible status, he or she also looks for mobility in a relatively fixed status. Conversion to Christianity emancipates one person from the tie of caste differences. The Bible does not permit the practice of the caste system. Thus, the desire for emancipation for caste bondage leads people to come to Christ.

Reasons From Above

There are also several spiritual reasons for people accepting Christ today in cities in North India. Factors from above were reasons for movements of conversion to Christ in the past. While referring to the historic mass movements in India, McPhee says that the opening move was from within or above (85). There is an increasing move of the Holy Spirit in cities that results in the conversion of the people to Christ. Power evangelism which includes demonstration of power encounter, exorcism, signs and wonders, healing etc. has become part of the day today life of believers in India. Even a new believer is involved in power evangelism that brings people to Christ through the intervention of supernatural power.

Power Evangelism Power evangelism is one of the major factors behind conversion to Christ in North India. Peter Wagner defines, "Power evangelism is evangelistic strategy based primarily on a visible manifestation of power of God through signs, wonders, miracles, and power encounters" (Wagner 177). According to John Wimber, "Power evangelism is a spontaneous, Spirit inspired, empowered presentation of the gospel…. The explanation of the gospel comes with demonstration of God's power through signs and wonders." (46). Therefore, power evangelism is the proclamation of the gospel accompanied with the demonstration of God's power. In a context like India where powerful gods are accepted as true, power evangelism attracts people to Christ.

Signs and Wonders. The demonstration of the signs and wonders meet the needs of people in a supernatural way. The emergence of several gurus, new mystic cults, and religious practices has made signs and wonders a common phenomenon in North India. People expect their gods to perform miracles. In this context, signs and wonders attest the gospel and prove that Jesus is the true God. In the first century, signs and wonders paved the way for the triumph of the gospel in the Gentile world. Wagner denotes, "Christianity swept through the Roman Empire because the people could see with their own eyes that Jesus did miracles greater than any gods they had known of" (Wagner 80). The signs and wonders performed by the apostles brought many people into the fold of Christ. The study of the book of Acts shows that people came to Christ through the proclamation of the gospel knit together with the signs and wonders. The performance of the signs and wonders in the book of Acts was a factor in the rapid growth of the church (Lea 632). The repeated use of the phrase "signs and wonders" in Acts reveals its significance. Wimber mentions that in the book of Acts, "on twenty occasions church growth was a direct result

of signs and wonders…" (Wimber 117). In Jerusalem, the people were attracted by the signs that escorted the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1–12). Longenecker writes that the attention of the crowd was "arrested by the signs at Pentecost" (273). Peter's sermon to the attracted crowd resulted in the increase of number of believers from hundred and twenty to three thousand (Acts 2:41). The apostles performed several other miraculous signs and wonders in Jerusalem (Acts 2:43; 5:12) and the people were added to the church (Acts 2:47; 5:14). In Samaria, the gospel was preached along with the signs (Acts 8:6–13). "Philip's Samaritan mission is full of signs and wonders" (Immanuel 87). The people saw the signs and believed the good news as they heard Philip (Acts 8:6, 12). In the city of Joppa, a disciple by the name Tabitha was brought back to life from death through Peter's ministry; following that, many people believed (Acts 9:37–42). In Iconium, signs and wonders confirmed the gospel message (Acts 14:3). In Ephesus, signs and wonders accompanied Paul's ministry (Acts 19:11); consequently, the people came to Christ and the church grew in the city. Signs and wonders play significant role even today in leading people to Christ and confirming the proclamation of the gospel.

  Healing. Several people came to Christ in India because of the supernatural healing that they experienced in life. Traditionally, it was a normal custom for people to depend on magic for healings, especially when the medical world could not heal someone. As people heard the gospel and were prayed for, they received healing in their lives. In the contemporary contest of India, healing occurred spontaneously according to the need, and took place both as the believers shared gospel and in public meetings. In the book of Acts, healing created an atmosphere for effective evangelism resulting in the

conversion of people. The healing of the lame man at the temple Gate called Beautiful in Jerusalem and Peter's sermon following that resulted in the conversion of many people (Acts 3:1–4:4). The cure at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple drew the crowds so that they could be reached by the preaching of gospel (Green 196). In Samaria, the multitude gave heed to the gospel message when the paralytic and crippled were healed (Acts 8:7). Peter healed Aeneas, who was paralyzed for eight years and as a result the people in Lydda and Sharon turned to the Lord (Acts 9:32–35). Wimber states that "[t]he evangelistic task was made easy for Peter, because of Aeneas's healing" (73). The healing of a crippled man in Lystra provided an opportunity for Paul and Barnabas to preach the gospel, which made many disciples in the city (Acts 14:8–10, 20). Luke refers to the healing ministry of Paul at Ephesus by stating, "God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured" (Acts 19:11–12). Simpson states that "Paul's ministry in Ephesus was marked by divine healing" (Simpson 74). Thus, supernatural healing accompanied with the proclamation of gospel is a vital element in the conversion of people to Christ.

Exorcism. Demon possession is very common in India due to the influence of idol worship and witchcraft. People are freed from the bondage of demons in exorcism. "Exorcism is the act of expelling evil spirits or demons by adjuration in the name of Jesus Christ and through His Power" (McClung 624). Once a person is delivered from demon possession, he or she is open for gospel. Such an event often impacts relatives and friends. The book of Acts says in Samaria the people gave heed to what was said when the evil spirits came out of many people (Acts 8:7). In Philippi, Paul exorcised the evil spirit from the slave girl, which had an indirect effect on the conversion of the Jailer

(Acts 16:16–34). In Ephesus, God did extraordinary miracles. Evil spirits left the people

through Paul's ministry (Acts 19:11–12). The failure of the seven sons of Sceva to cast

out demons in Ephesus made many people believe in Jesus (Acts 19:13–20). Thus, from

the beginning of the Ephesian church onward, exorcism resulted in the conversion of

people.

> **Power Encounter.** The power of God and power of pagan worship enters into the

conflict as the gospel of Jesus is proclaimed to people in darkness. "Power encounter is

the confrontation between God and another lesser power being" (Chia 20, 19–33). Eddie

Gibbs states, "Clashes between the power of God and the power of darkness are referred

to as power encounters" (195). The above definitions show that the power encounter is

the visible and practical demonstration of the God's power as the supreme through an

encounter between the power of God and the power of the devil. Early Church entered

into power encounter as they carried the gospel to the new arena. In the city of Samaria,

Philip encountered with Simon, the sorcerer, who had amazed the people with his magic

that they followed him (Acts 8:9–24). Warner states, "Philip's preaching powerfully

counteracted the hold which Simon Magus had upon the inhabitants of the city of

Samaria" (Warner 66). The power of God was demonstrated as supreme over the power

of Simon, and it opened the people to the gospel that they believed and were baptized

(Acts 8:12). In the city of Paphos in Cyprus, the power encounter took place between

Paul and Barnabas, the servants of God and Elymas, the sorcerer (Acts 13:4–12). Wimber

states that "[t]he scene is set for encounter between light and dark … Jesus had his

witness, Paul and Satan had his, Elymas" (41). When Paul and Barnabas shared the

gospel with the proconsul named Sergius Paulus, Elymas tried to turn proconsul away

from the truth. Then the missionaries challenged the evil spirit; and as a result, Elymas became blind. Consequently the proconsul believed in the teaching of the Lord (Acts 13:12). "When a power encounter broke the power of Elymas the proconsul believed. Satan's attempt to blind his mind failed." (Wagner 282, 278–288). The power demonstrated God's power as the supreme power over the powers of the devil and supernaturally enabled conversion to Christ. These divine interventions were not an end in itself, but a means to the conversion of the people and thus growth of the church. Thus, we can say that factors from below and factors from above contribute to the conversion to Christ in India. Together, these factors function as prime causes for Christward movement in Indian cities.

Emerging Trends in Conversion in Indian Context

People experience conversion to Christ in different levels in the Indian context. We can divide them broadly in three categories, such as people who are baptized and have become members of church openly; people who are baptized but have not become full members of the church; and people who accept Christ but are not baptized and still remain within the old religious system. In this situation, we will consider some of the emerging trends in conversion here.

Non–baptized Converts

In India, many people are becoming followers of Christ but are not baptized. Non–baptized converts are those who have not been baptized but have a deep devotion and commitment to Christ, and consider themselves as followers of Christ. Wingate says that most of the times they remain non–baptized because of the practical reasons like family ties, marriage alliances, death and funeral, fear of separation, loss of status, loss of

government privileges, legal complications, share in property, and job opportunities (88).

Biblically or theologically, they do not have any disagreement with baptism. However,

there are some issues to be considered here such as the theological necessity of baptism,

the danger of proselytism instead of evangelism, the question on the consolidation of

conversion, and the cost of discipleship.

The important question here is how do we understand the theological necessity of

baptism in the midst the contextual complexities caused by baptism. Of course there is no

doubt that without baptism one may get saved since salvation come through the

confession of faith, but any person who has repented and confessed has to proceed to

baptism. Theologically, baptism is related to the incarnation of Christ and his

identification with us and us with him. Baptism has been an integral part of conversion to

Christ from the New Testament period onwards. Baptism is an essential part of the Great

Commission (Matt. 28:19). Mark 16:16 says he who believes and baptized will be saved.

Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost called people to repent and to be baptized (Acts

2:38). Baptized believers are "dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Romans

6:11). The five–fold meanings of baptism by the World Council of Churches (WCC) are:

1) Participation in Christ's death and resurrection (Romans 6:3–5); 2) Conversion,

pardoning and cleansing (I Cor 6:11); 3)The Gift of the Spirit (Eph 1:13–14); 4)

Incorporation in the body of Christ (Eph 4:4–6); 5) The sign of the Kingdom (Gal 3:27–

28) (Jongeneel 116). Thus, there is a close link between conversion and baptism in the

New Testament, though it is not identical. Ian S. Kemp says that baptism is very closely

connected to conversion, though it cannot be identified with conversion or entirely

separated from conversion (18). Therefore, there is seldom any room for discussion about

the theological necessity of baptism followed by conversion. Jongeneel says that there is a problem of secret believers who sincerely believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, but who do not have the courage to be baptized because of the severe repercussions in their own families and communities (116). It is not possible to negate the importance of baptism, though we may consider various ways to execute baptism.

The practical significance of baptism for converts should be noted here, though it is not absolute in the salvation. Wingate says that "[b]aptism is important, not for salvation, but as a seal of faith and as means to help them not to relapse" (145). So, baptism is significant in consolidating conversion. Though consolidation of conversion is expanded beyond baptism, it gives converts clear direction on Christian life in their environment. It guides converts on issues such as how to be in the world, but not of the world, what they must reject, what they can be neutral about, and what they need not put aside.

In spite of the theological necessity and practical significance of conversion, in India, people have argued that conversion and baptism can be dichotomized. But the above discussion shows that baptism is inevitable in conversion; therefore, we must consider exploring the ways for baptism alongside the cultural context.

Conversion without Church Membership

There are many people who accept Christ today in India but do not want to become a full member in any church. While conversion to Christ is considered as essential, membership in the church is not understood as inevitable. So, they remain as believers without a being member of any existing church. There are three reasons that we can find from the Indian context that people normally do not take church membership. The first reason is that historically, the church has been perceived as foreign in the Indian

context. Many Indian theologians and thinkers proposed conversion without any connection to the church as an institution. We can see Brahmabandha Upadhyaya, a baptized Hindu convert in the Roman Catholic Church proposing the idea of Christian Ashram in opposition to the foreignness in the church. K.C. Sen of Brahmo Samaj was a baptized Hindu convert, but felt that Christian church is denationalized, and isolated from Hindu religion and Indian culture (Boyd 27–37). Subba Rao and his movement claimed to be disciples of Christ, but they rejected the idea of church and considered membership of the church unnecessary (Baggo 2). Thus, we see some of the Indian Christian theologians in the past were very critical about the institutionalized church in India due to its foreignness.

Another reason for the people not to prefer church membership is the constitutionally provided reservations to the Dalits. But these reservations are not available to a Dalit person who has been converted to Christianity. Though several attempts have been made to extend the reservations to these converts in the present political scenario, it seems to be a remote possibility. "Genuine Dalit Christians are not able to profess their faith publically due to fear of losing reservation facilities" (Jayaraj 33).

The third reason is social fear that the converts have in mind. The persecution that the converts have to go through keeps them secret in their faith in Jesus Christ; so, they do not want to join with an institutionalized church, though they personally would live as a genuine believer in Christ. These believers daily live the teaching of the scripture and remain faithful to Christ. Wingate refers to secret baptized Christians as "orthodox in

their faith but, for particular reasons wish to keep their baptism and Christian practice secret" (139).

But the WCC statement on baptism goes like this, "[B]aptism brings Christians into the life of the church universal as well as into the visible community of the local church" (Wingate 139). This means that the baptized person has to be a part of both the universal and local church. The major concerns here are their spiritual growth, the necessity of being part of the church, and future of the church in India. However, some of these concerns can be taken care of by being the church in an Indian context, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Contextualizing Conversion

One of the major questions in conversion in the Indian context is about the relation of the convert to the context in which he or she lives. It is an important matter of consideration that what should be the attitude of the convert to the former faith. Some converts prefer a definite discontinuity since they do not want any ambiguity in the new faith. Others continue to respect their old faith in which they grew up, and their family who are still living in that faith. Some become members of the church but not leaving their complete association with previous religious system, especially in the matters that are more social than religious such as celebration of festivals without getting into its religious worship. The major question is whether the new identity in Christ is defined in continuity with the cultures and religion of the indigenous peoples, or in discontinuity with and in oppositions to the cultures and traditions. In other words, Christian identity is in continuity of cultures or Christian identity is against cultures. There are various contextually–relevant approaches that try to address this issue from the Indian context

such as becoming Christian instead of being Christian by Felix Wilfred, critical contextualization by Paul Hiebert, and C– Spectrum of John Travis. These approaches are summarized in the following part.

Being Christian to becoming Christian. Felix Wilfred says that "[b]ecoming Christian overcomes the dialectical mold of thought and puts us into a new mind set of relationships. Here the presuppositions of identity construction are different. Identity construction could take place in a *centripetal* or in a *centrifugal* way" (160). He further explains that the identical way of defining Christian identity is a centripetal model. This model tries to strengthen its borders and mark its difference so that it acquires a profile of its own. Anything that threatens its centripetal identity is denied or rejected. Becoming Christian is a way of defining Christian identity in a centrifugal way. Becoming Christian is a model of defining Christian identity in relationship to the religiously other. The relationship with the other determines the Christian identity in which the other is perceived as a part of the identity itself not as a threat. According Wilfred, we do not depart from the concept of Christian to determine our relationship to other religions, but rather the nature and quality of our relationships to them will say what becoming "Christian" means (162). In a centripetal model, if one chose to be a Christian, then he or she has to live within the boundaries defined by Christian identity. It leaves almost no room for a Hindu to be a follower of Christ and still be a Hindu. It brings the concept that there is almost only one defined way of becoming a Christian.

The believers in the first century Church struggled to find their Christian identity in the then religiously pluralistic context. It was a process of discovery for them; and they were called the people of the Way (Acts 9:2; 18:26; 19:23; 24:22). To understand what is

Christian identity in a particular context, especially in a pluralistic context, one need to journey in its path. This can be achieved by a centrifugal model.

In this model there is further opportunity for Christians to be a community of grace of God in a religiously pluralistic context. While the centripetal model isolates Christianity in a multi–religious environment, the centrifugal model gives opportunity to witness to the grace of God to the relatives and friends of the converts. "Becoming Christian is an open–ended and not closed project as the expression 'being Christian' might suggest" (Wilfred 166). One person can become Christian without being discontinued in the cultural and social context though he or she is placed in a continuous transformation.

Some of the concerns are how can one be a Christian and yet not follow Christian faith in its wholeness? Christian faith needs to be accepted and followed in its totality. Another concern is that following Christ means to be one with Christ. Therefore, an encounter with Jesus and the relationship with Him have to be in a singular way, which has to be reproduced and standardized in every cultural context. However, we need to understand that becoming Christian is not something to be done in isolation. It is a journey of discovering Christian identity in one's context. It is a process in which one travels under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and Scripture as he or she takes help from the community of saints in the given context or church, as well as the people of pluralistic faith and culture as we interact with them daily.

Critical contextualization. In critical contextualization, old beliefs and customs are neither rejected nor accepted without examination. They are first studied with regard to the meanings and places they have within their cultural setting, and then evaluated in

the light of the biblical norms. In an evaluative study of culture and the scripture, new ways are developed to express the cultural practices. Thus, it takes both the culture and the scripture seriously and asks the church as a body to involve in the hermeneutical task (Hiebert 133).

The critical contextualization gives importance to both the scripture and culture of the people. The Bible is considered as the absolute authority in determining the acceptance or the rejection of any particular cultural practices. It takes the Bible seriously as the rule of faith and life. It also does not completely reject the culture of the people. Some elements of the culture are retained and some are modified, though few are rejected.

There are three steps in the process of critical contextualization. The first step is phenomenology, which is the exegesis of the culture. The people should gather and analyze the traditional customs to understand its meaning. The purpose here is to understand old ways and not to evaluate them. The second step is ontology, which is the exegesis of scripture. The pastor or the missionary provides the Bible study related to the customs of the people, which have been discussed already. The third step is critical response. This is the critical evaluation of the old customs in the light of the Biblical insights. Thus, critical contextualization allows the converts to continue the old customs and practices, which are not contradictory to the Scripture.

The c–spectrum. The c–spectrum is an approach for contextualizing conversion in religiously pluralistic communities. John J. Travis developed a practical tool for defining six types of Christ–centered communities found in Muslim communities. But this approach can be similarly applied among the Buddhist and Hindu communities. The

six types in the spectrum are differentiated by language, culture, worship forms, degree of freedom to worship with others, and religious identity. All follow Jesus as Lord, and the core elements of the gospel are the same in all groups. However, the spectrum consists of the diversity as people accept Christ and live as believers. The spectrum emphasizes the formation of Christ–centered communities in different levels. Diversity in the spectrum is the result of the differences in the ethnicity, history, tradition, language, culture, and even theology as people decided to follow Christ in their context. John J Travis provides a chart of the c–spectrum while defining six types of Christ–centered communities found in a Muslim context (664).

Table 2.1. C–Spectrum

	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6
Features of Christ–centered communities	Traditional Church	Traditional Church	Contextualized community	Contextualized community	Community remaining within Muslim Community	No Visible Community
	Using culture, both language and other forms, which are foreign to local Muslim culture	Using culture foreign to local Muslim culture, but using daily language	Using local cultural forms. Rejecting Islamic religious forms	Using local cultural forms and biblically acceptable Islamic forms	Using local cultural forms and biblically acceptable and reinterpreted Islamic forms	Secret believers may or may not be active in religious life of Muslim community
Socio– Religious Self–	Christian	Christian	Christian	Follower of Jesus	Muslim Follower of Jesus	Private follower of Jesus

	Christian	Christian	Christian	A kind of Christian	A Strange kind of Muslim	Muslim
Muslim Perception						

This chart was initially developed for contextualization among Muslim converts to Christ. However, these six types of Christ–centered communities are also found among the converts to Christ in North India.

Various Movements of Conversion to Christ in India

In the history of modern missions, people have accepted Christ in large numbers, resulting in movements of conversion to Christ in various parts of India. These movements of conversions are mass movement, people movement, church planting movement, *Yeshu Darbar* (a local movement), *Bhaktsing* movement, etc. However, we will consider few predominant movements in the following part.

Mass Movement

The mass movement in India was identified by Bishop J. Waskom Pickett in the 1930s. His book, *Christian Mass Movements in India*, published in 1933 as a result of the survey conducted in five states, proved that people came to Christ in many parts of India in larger communities such as villages, tribes, and castes. The term "mass movements" was not applied to group conversions until 1892. Later, due to the number of emerging movements, they were collectively called a mass movement (McPhee 85). The history shows that the conversion to Christ took place in large numbers, and it also brought spiritual transformation in the lives of people and communities along with social upliftment. In the mass Movement in India, often social forces were used to bring people

under the influence of the gospel. The converts had both spiritual and non–spiritual motives.

However, mass movements did not share any uniformity. There was no single or unified mass movement though new movements were appearing. Each was distinct in origin and development (McPhee 85). Mass movements were not planned evangelistic outreach but a spontaneous move of conversion in large numbers. McPhee observes that this phenomenon led Pickett and some other to focus not just on individuals, but also on groups (117).

Mass movement emphasizes the quantity of conversion among the communities through group decision or decision of the head such as the village head, caste head, etc. In various states of India, people became Christians as a result of the mass movement. Mass movement had created several criticisms about the quality of the conversion to Christ. In some sense, mass movement tends to produce churches divided along caste and tribal lines. From the concept of mass movement came the later development of the people movement that McGavran himself stated, "I lit my candle at Pickett's fire."

People Movement

According to McGavran, the proponent of people movement; "people movement arises by tribe or caste –wise movements to Christ" (McGavran, *Perspective* 628). In his book, *Bridges of God,* McGavran argues that the psychology of many societies is group mind and group decision. Peoples become Christian as this group mind is brought into a life giving relationship to Jesus as Lord (McGavran, *Bridges of God* 83). The people movement is a group conversion of people in a particular community, caste, clan, tribe, or family where the members come together and decide to become Christians. McGavran

also proposes seven principles of people movement such as: 1) aim for a cluster of growing congregations, 2) concentrate on one people, 3) encourage converts to remain with their people, 4) encourage group decisions for Christ, 5) aim for a constant stream of new converts, 6) help converts exemplify the highest hopes of their people and 7) emphasize brotherhood (McGavran, *Perspective* 629–31). People movement encourages entire families, clans, tribes, and caste communities to become Christian together. With respect to the old religion and social identity, the people movement Christianizes believers.

Church Planting Movement

The church planting movement is an ongoing multiplication of church enhanced by a radically simple church structure, and empowered by natural leaders of the community, who sustain and extend the movements. David Garrison defines the church planting movement as "a rapid and exponential increase of indigenous churches planting churches within a given people group or population segment" (7). Both among the reached and unreached places this movement has led many people to Christ. Most often in unreached pluralistic settings this movement creates a new structure of the church. According to Garrison, believers make a clean break with their former religion and redefine themselves with a distinctly Christian identity (10). Most often it is simple house groups led by lay leaders. Several thousand people accepted Christ through the church planting movement in North India in the last few decades.

Toward a Theology of Being Church in the Indian Context

The converts to the Christian faith often differ in their association to Christian congregation in the Indian context. There are a few converts in India who join with the

mainline churches. These mainline churches are normally founded by foreign missionary movements and are part of major denomination such as Roman Catholics, Church of North India, and Methodists, etc. There are others, in fact a good number of converts, who join with fellowship groups, which come together for worship and prayers. Some of the groups over the years get organized more like a church but differ in each case in its structure and function. In the previous section I mentioned that there are some converts who do not become part of a church, but rather remain as non–church believers and claim to be followers of Christ. Most of them are part of some informal fellowship groups. In this context we need to explore ways of being church in the Indian context so that people will become part of the church without hesitations. Wingate states that "conversion does not take place in the abstract" (198). Christward movement needs an ecclesiology that is contextually developed, unlike most of the mainline churches, with a defined structure and function, which has an atmosphere where the converts feel at home as they join the church. In the following part we will discuss three approaches of being church such as *satsang* or fellowship groups, missionary congregation and house church in the attempt to develop a relevant ecclesiology in a pluralistic context like India.

Satsang/Fellowship Groups

The Hindi word *satsang* commonly means fellowship groups. *satsang* is a word used generally to refer to the religious gatherings, which are very informal in its nature. It has become a common word among the Christians in North India today. Hundreds of Christian *satsang* emerged in different parts of the nation. Christian *satsangs* are gatherings of believers in Christ, which are mostly informal, though over the years some of these groups become very systematic and formal. At times, these *satsangs* become a

substitute for church. In such cases it corresponds with the idea of "believing without belonging." It also shares some commonality with the concept of simple church. While explaining the miraculous movements among Muslims, Jerry Trousdale states that church being done in a simple way in contrast to the common idea of church which usually focuses on facilities, leaders, programs, budget, and staff. A simple church has very few members, with all participants in an ongoing bible study, collective leadership, time of prayer, and fasting (116). While arguing for a church to be more than an organization, Kellard says that Early Church was minimalist in organization; they emphasized living the life. He further asks the question what would happen if the buildings were taken away, the services canceled and the ministers and staff removed from office (19). This refers to a pattern of church which is quite different from the common perception of church and points the church to be more simple way of life together. The *satsang* functions normally in a simple way that it does not follow pattern of institutional church such as membership, committee, disciplines, tithe, etc. There is normally a leader or groups of leaders who carry out the activities in a *satsang*. There are several reasons for the emergence of *satsang* in different parts of North India, such as it does not require the attendees to convert to Christianity socially, it is organized mostly as a fellowship gathering than church, and it is more adaptable in the midst of growing persecution in North India. Wingate point out reasons for non—church membership as

> because of the suffering that would be involved in open conversion, it may be because of the loss of cultural identity and family solidarity involved in joining the church, it may because joining the church is seen as anti–Indian…. The church is often seen as so inadequate that it would be better not to relate to it anyway. Far better to relate to Christ directly and avoid the complications that come from relating to an institution that has so many faults and which, by its very existence, causes disturbance within the culture of India, both as community and in its effect on individuals (188).

Moreover, there is no specific structure needed for a *satsang* model of Church. The building structure of a church is invisible in this pattern. A *satsang* can meet anywhere for worship such as a house, hall, under the tree, in an open ground, coffee house, or a church building. It does not require any specific building pattern. Church buildings are not essential either for numerical growth or spiritual depth (Kellard 32). This approach is very much practical in the *satsang* model.

However, such an idea of being follower of Christ without being member of a church leads to the fundamental questions of ecclesiology. We got to ask questions, such as is it possible to be a believer in Christ without joining the church? If so, is it desirable in the Indian context? Is there an alternative way of being church appropriate to the Indian context? What would be the rate of sustainability of such an approach? Does the New Testament support such an approach? All these questions leads to the basic question what sort of church is appropriate to the Indian context which will have a theological, practical, and contextual validity?

Missionary Congregation

Jongeneel refers to various structures of the church and discusses the development of the missionary congregation structure in the 20th century. Missionary congregations are local communities of Christians who dedicate themselves to the spread of the gospel, the planting of churches, service to neighbors, etc. (202). Missionary congregation is a model of church where church is shaped to focus primarily on carrying out the mission in the world. WCC initiated a project between nineteen sixty six to seventy one entitled "The Missionary Structure of the Congregation" in order to achieve an ongoing reform of structures, in order to enable the congregations to "emerge" and, thereafter, to participate

more adequately in Christ's mission in the world (Jongeneel 204). So, a missionary congregation is a church model involved in mission in the world. In order to build the missionary congregations missionaries, church planters and pastors should first gain a new vision of the Church in its local setting (Van Engen 26). Understanding church in the context is vital to be a missionary congregation. Van Engen refers that in Vatican II brought a radical shift in understanding of the church from an institutional view of the Church to a perspective on the Church as community, fellowship, and people of God (89). This is vital step in preparing church to be a missionary congregation. Church is not a separate entity but a community in the society. In the following part we will discuss about the functions, forms, and leadership of missionary congregation.

Function of the Missionary Congregation

There are different functions of the missionary congregations which are mentioned in the following part. Van Engen, in his book, discusses about the function and leadership of missionary congregation (122). We will consider these in detail in the following part.

Prophet, priest, and king. The missionary congregations minister through the threefold offices of Christ such as prophet, priest, and king. Van Engen refers to Barth in explaining how the threefold office of Christ gives directions for the ministry of the church. According to Barth, the Church's ministry is arranged around Christ's offices as Lord who humbled himself as a servant to do the work of atonement (priestly office); as a royal man in whom humanity is exalted and adapted to fellowship with God (kingly office), and as God–man who is the mediator and guarantor of reconciliation (prophetic office) (Van Engen 122). Thus, the ministry of the Church is an extension to the ministry

of Christ under the three offices. Because church is understood as a community, it is a prophetic, priestly, and royal people sent into the world by Christ for the ministry. Believers in Christ are called as kings and priest in Revelation 1:6, 5:10 and priestly community in 1 Peter 2:9. In Acts 2, believers are a prophetic community. Van Engen explains how these offices of Christ are implemented in the ministry of the church. The prophetic office relates to the ministry of the church in calling for and working toward justice, toward shalom, and toward righteousness and peace in human relationship and in social structures. The Church's priestly ministry involves its sacramental presence; its call for reconciliation of people with God, each other, and themselves; and the offer of redemption in Christ. The kingly ministry is related to the role of Church in nation building; in bringing harmony to chaos; in calling for government, which cares for its people; and in organizing itself for the proclamation of the gospel of freedom and grace in Jesus Christ (124). Thus, the office of prophet, priest, and king is fulfilled through a missionary congregation.

Healer and Liberator: The ministry of healing and liberation are important functions of the church. In Luke 4:16–20, Jesus' self–declaration of His own ministry reveals Himself as healer and liberator. The Church is expected to continue this ministry as it is the body of Christ in the world.

Van Engen says that healing is one of most important functions which the Church can exercise in the world. Be it healing of body, mind, or spirit, the Church has fulfilled the function of healer as an integral part of its being the redeemed community of those who beseech the humanity (126). Newbigin says that healings are a true explanation of what is happening; but if nothing is happening, no explanation is called for, and the

words are empty words (132). So, healings are explanation of the Word of God through the church. Healing is vital in mission field as it is a means of conversion for many people.

Church is the liberated people of God in the world of bondage. Jesus Christ liberates from the penalty of sin, from the consequences of sin, from oppression of spirits, from the penalty of the law, and from the broken relationship. Spiritual, emotional, personal, political, economic, and social liberation are an essential part of the church's role in the world (Van Engen 126). People are under different kinds of bondages and as they get liberated through the church they are attracted to Christ.

Ministry Leadership for a Missionary Congregation

A missionary congregation needs a leadership which is appropriate for it. The question is what kind of leadership is appropriate for a missionary congregation in a pluralistic context like India? Van Engen refers to the Lausanne movement and states that missionary congregations will emerge when leaders equip all the members to realize their greatest potential for growth, maturity and service in a relationship of shared ministry and cooperative outreach of the whole gospel by the whole church to the whole world (151). The whole church needs to be involved in missions.

Leadership of the congregation should equip the members in the church to carry out the leadership in the world. Newbigin writes about the leadership without dichotomizing between the clergy and laity leadership structure in the church that the whole Church is called to be in Christ a royal priesthood and every member of the body is called to the exercise of this priesthood and this priesthood is to be exercised in the daily life and work of Christians in the secular business of the world. But this will not

happen unless there is a ministerial priesthood which serves, nourishes, sustains, and guides this priestly work. The priestly people need a ministering priesthood to sustain and nourish it. Therefore, Newbigin further says that men and women are not ordained to this ministerial priesthood to take priesthood away from the people but in order to nourish and sustain the priesthood of the people (235). Van Engen says that the ordained person's primary function will be to build up the body of Christ so it will emerge to become God's missionary people (157). Therefore the ministerial leadership for a missionary congregation means equipping and training all those who are part of the congregation to fulfill their several roles in mission through their faithful witness in their daily life.

From a theoretical perspective, a missionary congregation needs "situational leadership." In different contexts and situations, the congregation needs different style of leadership. The appropriate style depends on the task of the organization, the phase of the life of the organization and the needs of the moment. The style of leadership is never static. The congregation, the context, the leader and the followers are in constant change. Situational leadership maximizes the sensitivity to the relationship of leaders and led. The style of leadership must change to fit the growth of the followers. The style of leadership effective in a different situation is dependent on the type of organizational theory one would adopt in life. Van Engen mentions five major organizational theories while explaining the style of leadership of the missionary congregation such as traditional (parent–priestly), charismatic (prophetic–inspirational), classical (aggressive–directive), human relations (sensitive–non–directive) and systems (professional–activator) (175). These organizational theories are developed based on the relationship between the leader and followers. The personality, leadership style and symbolic presence of the leader

strongly influence whether the congregation emerges to become a missionary people of God. The leaders embody the characteristics they want to ignite in their congregation. So the leader of the missionary congregation has to embody the life of a missionary leader.

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House Church Model

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The house church model has played a vital role in the conversion to Christ in the North Indian urban context. Del Birkey states, "First hand reports of the evangelical church in India also reveal an outbreak of house church Christianity" (73). The structure and function of house church makes it an unquestionable model for Indian context. We will examine the nature and function of the house churches in the following part.

Structure of the House Church

The structure of the house church has incredible missiological significance. The structure often led to the further growth of the church and conversion of people. The major missiological elements in structure are the building, size and the leadership of the church.

Building: The house churches in the New Testament met together for worship in the private homes of its members and there were no separate church buildings. "The church in the home was the basic building block of the congregation (I Corinthians 11:18, 23)" (Abraham 319). In Jerusalem there were several house churches as the number of the believers increased to three thousand and later five thousand. They broke bread in their homes (Acts 2:46) and did not stop teaching at home (Acts 5:42). In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul passes on greetings to the Corinthian believers from Priscilla and Aquila, "together with the church in their house" (I Corinthians 16: 19). Jesus gave us the commission to go and make disciples of all nations. It is the growing conviction of many

Christians around the world that this will only be ever achieved by having a church—the shopping window of God—in walking distance of every person on the globe (Abraham 322). The house churches make it possible. In the Indian context, as the number of converts is increasing in the cities in North India, the existing church buildings are insufficient to meet the challenges of increasing conversion. Moreover, making more church buildings needs more finance, land and permission from governments which are difficult to meet in India. Whereas, house church model enables to overcome all these challenges.

The size of the house church. There are no definite claims about the absolute number of the house churches. The New Testament gives a picture that the house church was not very big in numbers. Birkey says that the house church averaged about a dozen persons (73). Wolfgang Simon states that "an average house church would be just 8, 10 or 12 people; a large church, 15 and a mega church would sport not thousands of attendees, but 21 or 22" (20). While referring to the size of Early Church, Banks says, "The average membership was around thirty to thirty–five people" (38). The maximum recommended number is between fifteen to forty five. It leads to the multiplication and growth of church in every neighborhood.

Leadership structure. The house church structure in the New Testament had only a simple lay–leadership structure. In the first century, Early Church was started with the leadership of the apostles. But later the lay people were appointed as the leaders of the house churches. The hosts of the churches became the natural leaders of the church (Birkey 58). It refers that the church did not have a highly–developed governing administrative framework. The apostles were the overall leaders of the church, though

there were also bishops, presbyters or elders and deacons. But each house church was led by the elders. Even today, the house church structure does not have an established leadership. The simple lay–leadership structure further contributes to the church growth because as the conversion to Christ took place in more numbers the leaders also are multiplied.

Function of the House Church

The functions of the house church significantly contribute to the evangelism and conversion. Some of the functions of the house church are discussed below.

Worship. In the New Testament, worship took place in a small group setting in the private homes of its members. William A. Beckham states, "The kind of worship described in the New Testament suggests a small group setting as its primary worship context . . . The first century Christians saw each other's faces…" (109). Ephesians 5:18–19 and Colossians 3:12–17 well describe the features of the house church worship in the New Testament. In house church worship, every member participates, rather than being mere spectators, because of the small size of the house churches.

Fellowship and care. The house church model enables a strong practice of *koinonia.* While describing the first century Christian Church, Bank says, "Even the meeting of the whole church was small enough for a relatively close relationship to develop between the members" (36). The small size of the church was appropriate for developing a close relationship and intimacy with one another. The fellowship of the house churches in the New Testament often expressed itself as a family. The church was perceived as a family. Birkey states, "The family household basis must have had an overwhelming effect on the earliest believers, understanding of the church as family, the

very household of God (Ephesians 2:18–19; 3:14–15; 5:1; 6:23)" (55). The church

functioned as a community which is a loving family. Both the local gathering and

heavenly assembly are to be regarded as nothing less than God's family (Bank 51). The

understanding of the church as a family enabled the members for the fellowship which

consequently attracted several people. Fellowship in the house church provides individual

care and nurturing to the people so that they can be edified. David Prior says that the

home church is the ideal context for working out the practical implications of God's

word. We need a more personal, discipling atmosphere of the house church to follow it

through with each individual (72). People will be naturally encouraged and motivated to

bring more people to Christ when they are edified.

House Church as witnessing community. The house church in the New

Testament provided a sense of community to the believers. The concept of community is

important for the edification and growth of the church. Howard A. Snyder states that a

"Genuine Christian community itself is evangelistic and a church which is weak in

community will be weak in evangelism" (154). House churches are established when the

members began to live a community life than living according to individual desires. It

was a corporate endeavor to become witness than individual attempts. The church is a

community which is a witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Incarnational function. House churches are more incarnational than the

organizational churches. Simson states, "The people whom God typically and scripturally

uses to unfold and incarnate the church in a given situation are apostolic and

prophetically gifted Christians" (81). The members in the church are empowered to

multiply the churches in different locations and cultures. The church, in the best sense of

the word, would become the mission, the sender as well as the sent one (Simson 201). It would spread the gospel message to the various people and culture and remain the church there. The incarnational function gives the house church a centrifugal nature.

Networking and household evangelism. House churches use social networks for evangelism. The gospel is shared through family networking, friendship networking and at times, through professional networking. After a family or family member is reached through networking, the gospel is shared to the entire household. The believers in the church are encouraged to witness the gospel to other people through friendship and family networking. More than winning individuals, the importance is given to winning a whole family unit. Simson states that the New Testament church seeks to start a new house church with a whole, newly converted family, which is then linked with other families into multiplying house churches (276). After a family or household became Christians, they became the carriers of the gospel to their relatives and friends. The gospel spread from the house of the believers into their relatives and to their friends. Aghamkar says when families were united and formed into a church, they began to exert a tremendous influence on their relatives and friends (26). Thus, the Gospel is shared through networking and households in a house church model.

The above discussion reveals the significance and missiological relevancy of house church model in Indian context. However, it also has several disadvantages. One of the major areas is a leadership problem. The leader may become more authoritative, and others may feel bad about it and withdraw from evangelistic activities. The life, testimony and behavior of host is also vital that any negative steps here would affect the function of the church. A house church often faces the challenge of turning to be a family event. In

the Indian context, people normally have a longing for a sacred place, and a house church fails to meet this expectation. House churches are prone to be heretical when leaders do not have proper training in Bible and doctrine. If these issues can be worked out, the house church model is very conducive for being church in the context of cities in North India.

In this section toward being church in Indian context, my aim is not to come up with another model of the church which would add to existing numbers. I have mentioned three model of churches above which contains aspects that would correspond better for model of *ecclesia* for Chrstiward movement among urban dwellers in North India. However, without pointing out a specific model of church, I would suggest core elements that should be emphasized any simple *ecclesia* of Christward movement:

Worship –	Not making is a performance but in spirit and in truth
Teaching –	Discipleship oriented that intellectual preaching
Fellowship –	Real sense of care and communion together
Venue –	Any place comfortable for gathering and worship
Leadership –	Spiritual and low profile
Organizational –	Minimal to meet the criteria
Mission–	Life style
Multiplication–	Natural
Ownership–	Shared by all
Responsibility–	Shouldered

Gap in the Literature

The major gap in the literature is the lack of documentation of Christward movements in the cities in India. There is no systematic research done on the conversion to Christ in the recent years in cities.

Also there is no literature about the characteristic of the Christward movements such as its structure and function.

There are no Biblical or theological writings which directly discusses foundations for Christward movements.

There is seldom any literature for a model of *ecclesia* in the context of Indian cities. The question remains unanswered whether there can be a new way of being church in India appropriate for its particular context, biblically valid and sustainable in India. Church in Indian context should develop a model where the converts would feel at home as they decide to become part of the church. Though so much has been written on contextualization over the years, there is a need for systematic documents for contextualizing conversion among the urban dwellers in India.

There is also very little literature on the relationship of the movement to the established and mainline churches in India. Often, the mainline institutionalized churches do not realize these movements, or do not validate these movements as genuine. Therefore they do not extend their hands of support for the movements. There should be guidelines to establish and maintain relationship between these movements and established churches.

Research Design

In order to answer the research questions, a qualitative approach is employed in the study. Three different methods were used to gather information from the participants of the study such as individual interview, focus group and open–ended questionnaires. Ten leaders of Christward movements were selected from Delhi. These leaders gave consent to participate both in the interview and focus group discussions. Two focus group discussions were conducted in Delhi. One hundred questionnaires were distributed to their believers in Sunday worship, and they had to return it before they left the premise of worship. Major methodology applied was ethnography along with insights from Sensing. The data was analyzed with a multi–method approach as proposed by Sensing. Graphs, figures and tables were used for the tabulation and presentation of the data.

Review of the Chapter

This chapter deals with the biblical and theological foundation for Christward movement. The conversion of Nineveh in the Old Testament is analyzed along with discussions on Jesus movements in the Gospels and accounts of conversion in the book of Acts. The second part of the chapter is a discovery of theology of conversion in Indian context and developing a model of *ecclesia* for this movement. It analyzes the types of conversion, trends in conversion, reasons for conversion and contextualization of conversion. It also considers movements of conversion in the past in India. It also investigates three different models of congregations such as *Satsang,* missionary congregations and house church model in order to develop an *ecclesia* stical model for Christward movement in India.

CHAPTER 3

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE PROJECT

Introduction

This chapter describes the methodological procedure for this project. In the beginning, the nature and the purpose of the project is explained, followed by a brief description of the research questions. The ministry context of the project is the city of Delhi which is discussed in detail in this chapter. Then, the chapter talks about the methodological details for collecting information from the field. It includes a discussion about the participants of the project, pilot study, procedure for collecting and analyzing data and reliability of the project.

Nature and Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to study and analyze the Christward movement among the urban dwellers in North India. Until the recent past the conversion accounts in North India were predominantly found in the villages. But it is observed that during the last one decade that there had been a significant increase in the receptivity to the Gospel of Christ among the urban dwellers in North India. The receptivity to the gospel resulted in an unprecedented surge of Christward movement in the cities of north India. Therefore, this phenomenon is to be considered as a significant development in course of the church in India.

It is also observed that the receptivity to the gospel among the urban dwellers varies from community to community and from time to time. A particular community becomes highly receptive to the gospel for a period of time after which, due to various factors, this receptiveness is resisted or completely blocked out.

With a special reference to the city of Delhi, the fact is that several non–

Christians from various communities have turned to Christ in the recent past. But since

there is no systematic research done in this area, there is no clear understanding on how

to handle various issues arising from such a movement. As a result, the Church finds it

difficult to keep up the momentum and nurture this Christward movement.

McGavran observed that the Christward movement can be destroyed if it is not

nurtured properly (43). Therefore, the purpose of the research is to carry out a detailed

analysis of conversion to Christ and to identify and prioritize its needs and challenges so

that the Church can engage in nurturing and accelerating this Christward movement

among the urban dwellers in the Northern cities of India.

<div align="center">Research Questions</div>

Research Question #1

What are the characteristics of Christward movement in Delhi?

This research question is aimed to understand the Christward movement among

urban dwellers in the city of Delhi. It explores the perception of people about Christward

movement. It includes details like the general outlook toward the movement, the practice

of the movement, the teachings of the movement, the demographic segments of the

movement, and the impact of the movement upon the people etc.

I have primarily used focus groups discussions to collect information regarding

the characteristics of the Christward movement. I have also used open–ended

questionnaires for believers to obtain information individually from them about the

characteristics of the movement. However, one question about the characteristics of the

movement was included both in focus groups and the individual interview. After the

demographic part of the questionnaire, I have used questions to collect information of the characteristics of the movement. For the ease of communication and effectiveness of the method, the questions in the focus group and the questionnaire for the individual interview were both translated into Hindi.

Research Question #2

What are the impulses behind Christward movement?

The second research question addressed the reasons behind the Christward movement in Delhi. The urban dwellers in North India had been generally non–receptive to the gospel over the years. What are the factors that brought about this openness in them toward the gospel of Christ? In this study, several factors were analyzed that contributed toward the emergence of the Christward movements such as spiritual, social, economic, leadership etc. The information was collected from the personal interview and open–ended questionnaires. Questions 2–6 in the semi–structured interview guide addressed this question. Questions 2–10 in the open–ended questionnaire provided information for this question.

Research Question #3

What needs to be done to seize the opportunity of openness to Christ and to accelerate this movement?

This question attempted to identify the needs of Christward movements and to prioritize them. It considered the needs of movement in general and also the specific needs of the leaders as well as the believers. Identifying these needs and prioritizing them would help to accelerate the movement in both quantitative as well as qualitative growth.

Questions 7–10 in the semi–structured interview guide is used to identify the needs of the

movement in general, and also the specific needs of the leaders. Question 10 in the focus

group also brought out the information about the factors behind the movement. It

provided information about the needs of the movement from the perspective of a leader.

In the open–ended questionnaire, questions 11–16 were used to collect needs of the

movement from the perspective of a believer.

Ministry Context: Delhi

The ministry context selected for the study is the city of Delhi, the capital of

India. Delhi is one of the oldest cities in India. R.L. Singh says that Delhi imbibes the

spirit of India and epitomizes her age–long culture and glory (118). There are several

reasons for selecting the city of Delhi for this study. However, the primary reason is that

we could identify several clusters of Chirstward movement throughout the various parts

of the city. Thus, it serves as a prototype to understand Christward movement in the cities

of Northern India.

Delhi is also the fastest growing city in India. Delhi is a metropolitan city, and the

third largest city in India, after Kolkata and Mumbai. It is the largest city in North India.

Migrants comprise the majority of its population. Especially after the partition of India

and Pakistan in 1947, the mass migration of people changed the demographic structure of

Delhi. Later, migrant laborers from all over North India turned to Delhi in search of

livelihood. The large scale opportunity for business and service in the increasing

government departments combined with industrial development caused the population

explosion in Delhi (Singh 119). The Delhi government's economic survey in 2003–2004

reveals that almost fifty percent of the migrants are from Uttar Pradesh, followed by

Haryana (11.82%), Bihar (10.99%), Rajasthan (6.17%), Punjab (5.43%), West Bengal (2.79%) and Madhya Pradesh (2.71%) (*Times of India* 10). It is reported that every day, 665 persons migrate to Delhi (*Times of India* 10). This huge migration is also reflected in the Christward movement in Delhi. It is also city of governance for nation and a prime business center of the country. There are many high officials and government authorities in the city. All of this stands in contrast to the clusters of millions of slum dwellers scattered across the city.

Geographically, Delhi is divided into five directional territories identified as South Delhi, North Delhi, East Delhi, West Delhi and central Delhi.

Participants

Criteria for Selection

Christward movement among urban dwellers in North was the focus of the study; therefore, the participants of this research were both the leaders and the believers involved in this movement.

The criteria for leaders included various factors such as the number of people they are leading, their ministry experience in Delhi, their experience with the community they are ministering to, their ethnic and social background etc. An intentional diversity is brought into the study to incorporate various details of the movement from every aspect of their life and ministry. In order to obtain the data from the perspective of the number of believers involved, the leaders were given a different amount of questionnaires depending upon the number of people they were ministering to. Some of the leaders were given five questionnaires, while some were given fifteen, depending upon the size of their congregation.

The believers are selected based on the following criteria, such as age, class, gender, family background and their duration of living in Delhi etc. These details will give insights to identify trend of who were coming to Christ and where the movement was happening.

I contacted twenty five leaders involved in Christward movement in Delhi. I explained the scope of my study and the project. All of them were very appreciative, but four of them had difficulty in their availability for the interview and focus group due to other commitments. Though twenty one of them agreed to be interviewed, I selected only ten of them who were from diverse contexts, in order to bring maximum diversity in the study. The criteria for selecting these ten leaders were the following: 1) They personally led one or more groups of Christward movement in Delhi. 2) They lived in Delhi and had ministry experience in Delhi.3) They were willing to objectively participate in the study and to share their views. 4) They ministered to multi ethnic and diverse community in Delhi. 5) They were willing to allow their believers to fill the questionnaires.

Similarly, the criteria for selecting the believers were the following:
1) They were personally associated with one of the Christward movements. 2) Their leader was also a part of this research.3) They were present on the corporate worship on the day when questionnaire was distributed. 4) They were randomly selected for research.

Description of Participants

The participants in the research are categorized into two groups, the leaders of Christward movement, and the believers in Christward movement.

Participant Leaders. Christward movement in Delhi is led by various leaders. Interestingly, the movement does not have one particular key leader rather it is happening in

an informal way in different groups in multiple locations all across Delhi. Each of these groups has their own leaders, whether it is a small group or large group. The total number of leaders selected for this study is ten. Nine of them are men, while one is a woman. The gender difference among leaders is primarily because in the Indian Christian context there are not many women who are in ministerial leadership. However, there are few wives of the leaders who share the responsibility of leadership along with their husbands. The age of the leaders overarched from twenties to sixties. The level of leadership involvement also varied that some led a small group of fifty people, while some led various groups in different parts of the city; yet others led a large group of people such as three hundred to five hundred people. Their ministerial experience in the city of Delhi also varied from 2 years to 31 years. Eight of them had a theological degree, while two of them never had any formal theological training. Five of these leaders were fully involved in the ministry. Three of them served in government jobs along with ministry, while two of them were involved in formal school education along with ministry. Four of them were born in Christian families, while six of them were born in non–Christian families and were first–generation believers themselves. Except two of them, all migrated to Delhi from other cities.

   Participant believers. The believers who participated in the study were both male and female. The age of the participants varied from eighteen to sixty five. There were recent migrants as well as people who have been living in Delhi for two to three generations, and a few were local people of Delhi. Some of them were new believers, while others have been in the faith for a longer time, and in fact, were involved in some witnessing to others. Most of them had average formal education, a few of them were highly educated, and a few of them had little to no formal education.

Ethical Considerations

As part of the ethical considerations, I sent a consent letter to the participants. An invitation was extended to them to participate in the research along with a briefing on the purpose of the research. They were informed about the risk involved in the study and the confidentiality of their identity and information. They were also made aware of the benefit of the study. They were given the liberty to ask any clarification about the study, and also the freedom to quit being a part of the study at any time during the period of research. The participants gave written consent before they were interviewed or completed the questionnaire. There was no force of any kind upon them to participate in the study. The complete format of the informed consent letter is given in the Appendix B.

All the efforts were made to ensure confidentiality. The personal details such as names, phone numbers and email address shall not be revealed to anyone outside the research. The research report will also not include these details of the people and it shall be kept confidential. The members of the Christward movement may be afraid about their secret identity as followers of Christ and sometimes may not want to make it known to public. In order to address this issue, I assured them that their details and information shall not be motioned anywhere in the research and shall not be shared with anyone else outside the research. The recording of the interview as well as questionnaires shall not be shared to anyone. The information would be stored in secure location and recordings will be kept in password protected digital files that others will not have access to it. It will be kept personally in my custody. After the completion of the study, it will be deleted without any back up from the digital voice recording equipment and computer.

Pilot Test or Expert Review

A pilot test was done to ensure the effectiveness of the methodology before finally executing the project. The test was done with two leaders of Christward movement and the believers in their groups. Written consent was obtained from them for this study. This interview helped me to access my methods and questionnaires in order to get the correct data for the research questions. The questionnaires also were corrected with right words after the pilot study. The pilot study gave insights about the significance of collectively discussed answer for some of the questions. As a result, a focus group interview of leaders was added to the study as a method for data collection.

Data Collection

The research employs qualitative approach to collect information from the participants. The reason for selecting qualitative approach is that "qualitative research is grounded in the social world of experience and seeks to make sense of life experience…. Qualitative research produces culturally specific and contextually rich data critical for the design, evaluation and ongoing health of institutions like churches" (Sensing 57–58). Christward movement is an experience of transformational relationship in the life of people. The aim here is to develop a model or design for the movement which is culturally specific and contextually rich. These qualitative data for the research is collected through a semi–structured interview, focus groups and open–ended questionnaires. This is a pre-intervention research where the aim is to develop a design which would accelerate Christward movement through systematically documenting the reasons behind the movement, and to prioritize the needs of the movement along with identifying them. The research employs ethnography coupled with the insight from Tim

Sensing on qualitative research. James P. Spradley, in His book, *Ethnographic* Interview*, describes participants as informants from whom the researcher learns how things are defined and categorized (55). Ethnographic research provides a detailed in–depth description of everyday life and practice through close exploration resulting in summaries of activities, typification and identification of themes and regularities. This methodology would help to learn from the informants in categorizing the characteristics, identifying reasons and needs for accelerating Christward movement in Delhi.

In order to carry out this project, I contacted twenty–five leaders of Christward movement in Delhi. I interviewed ten of those leaders who were willing to participate in it, and who had the potential to bring diverse data for a holistic research on the topic. I conducted a semi–structured interview with all these ten leaders. The reason for the semi structured interview was that it controlled the direction of the interview unlike open interview, and also gave room for the probe questions unlike structured interview where the responded had to answer one of the options as an answer to the question. Sensing says that in the semi structured interview, "[a]n interview guide ensures good use of time, makes the process more systematic and comprehensive, and keeps the interviewer focused on the purpose of the interview" (107). I prepared an interview guide with eleven questions. These questions included diverse perspectives on the topic. Their experiences, opinion, views etc. were given special consideration in developing questions. Probe questions were also included in the interview. The circumstances and gestures of the respondents also were incorporated in the collection of the data. The meaning behind what was said in the interview was also noticed and documented during the interview.

The interviews were done in the office, house and in a coffee house according to the convenience of the people.

Another method employed to collect data for the research from the leaders was a focus group. Sensing says that "[t]he synergy of group will often provide richer data than if each person in the group has been interviewed separately" (120). The leaders were divided into two groups. The first group was a mixed group of leaders from North India. The second group was the leaders who had been working in Delhi but were basically from South India. This provided homogeneity among the group members. The first group had six leaders, and another group had four people. I moderated the focus group. Mr. Kiran helped me in taking notes. I prepared instructions about the focus group and a series of eleven questions for the focus group interaction. The questions were asked in Hindi, and the discussion was conducted in Hindi since English was not a comfortable language for all the participants. These leaders met in the special meeting room in South Delhi near the government quarters for its employees. Lunch and coffee were arranged for the participants. The focus group lasted two–and–half hours, and was served at the halfway point. In general, I divided twenty minutes for each question. Questions were discussed in detail that there were several probe questions. It was obvious that on the same topic, sometimes one person's comment encouraged others to speak and enriched the discussion. However, there were also occasion when the group members disagreed with one another, and I had to control the situation so that they did not get into a strong argument. Whenever the conversation went off–track, I reminded the members to come back to the topic. There were a few talkative people and I intentionally toned them down in the discussion. Some of the leaders were very active in the discussion, but I had to

intentionally ask questions to three people to get them involved in the discussion. The focus group discussions were recorded.

Open–ended questionnaires were used to collect data from the believers in Christward movement. The first question was about the biographic information. Some of the questions were narrowly focused, while others were very general. I prepared questionnaires both in Hindi and English, and people could choose any of these two languages. The questionnaires were distributed to the believers through the leaders. One hundred questionnaires were distributed. People took questionnaires more seriously since the leaders distributed them. It was given after the cooperate worship and they gave it back before they left the premise. Questionnaires were collected later from their leaders. The questions were to identify the impulses behind the movement and the needs of the movement. Instructions were given not to sidetrack from the primary focus of questions.

I used non—English speaking people for the interview, focus group and questionnaire. Because all of the leaders and members of Christward movement were not able to speak in English ,but all of them could speak and understand Hindi very well, I had to translate the interview guide and questionnaire into Hindi which was very effective for the non—English speaking people. Also, interviews were translated back into English before they were employed in the research.

Data Analysis

The data analysis was done with ethnography in conjunction with a multi–method approach of evaluation as proposed by Sensing for analyzing the data: *Three Analytical Frames: Themes, Slippage and Silences* (197). Sensing proposes to organize data as areas

of significant overlaps as themes, areas of disagreement as slippage and areas not represented such as taken for granted self–evident, or areas where people did not speak as silences. As I analyzed the data, I employed thick description (Sensing 198) by considering the participant's opinion and personal experiences as well as feeling on the topic. Coding the data is the process of labeling the collected data to make it more accessible for interpretation. The coding is done based on various themes and subthemes in the research. The reporting of the data was done around the themes and graphs; charts and tables were used to display them.

In the data analysis I listed themes and patterns that emerged from the transcript in the individual interview and focus group. The repeated words, terms, phases, ideas, themes, strategies etc. were analyzed through overlapping themes and comparisons, differences and contradictions and silence. I processed the information into various labels and arranged them accordingly. I used Microsoft Word and Excel for reporting data by tables, graphs and charts.

The data was collected through three different instrumentation semi–structured interviews, focus groups and open–ended questionnaires. The interview and focus group brought information from the perspective of leaders and questionnaires from the perspective of believers. The believers' perspective was simultaneously referred to in analysis along with the leaders' perspective on themes and patterns.

Reliability and Validity of Project Design

In order to maintain the reliability and validity of the research, all the details of the interview were properly documented. Demographic details of the participants were also incorporated and documented to ensure the reliability of the study. Proper transcripts

of all the interviews were also included in documentation. Moreover, all the answers, questions and suggestions that came out of the interview were noted down and referred to. All the questions or discussions that further guided the interview were also noted. All the information collected in Hindi or other languages were translated back to English. Individual interviews and focus groups had separate semi structure interview guide. Separate questionnaires were used for believers. All these are given in appendix A. There are specific divisions of questions both in the interview guide and questionnaires which addresses the three major research questions. Triangulation of the data was also done which points toward the reliability of the data.

Review of the Chapter

This chapter provided an analytical framework for the project. At the outset, the chapter portrayed the nature and purpose of the research. It also described the research questions and how the answers to these questions were found. The chapter explained the procedure for collecting and analyzing the data preceded by a summary about the ministry context. The chapter contains a section on the reliability and validity of the project design.

CHAPTER 4

EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT

Introduction

This chapter presents that data generated from the field through focus group discussions, interviews and questionnaires. The data contains answers to three research questions asked in order to discover the purpose of the research, which is to accelerate a Christward movement in Delhi. The raw data is arranged into domains and themes in the presentation. The chapter also includes the hidden meanings behind the words and sentences expressed by the participants. Data is arranged under the title of three research questions, such as what are the characteristics of a Christward movement? What are the impulses behind a Christward movement? What are the needs of a Christward movement? The chapter also gives a summary of major findings.

Participants

Ten leaders of Christward movements in Delhi and their believers who are part of this movement participated in this study. The demographic analysis of leaders contains gender, age, native place, years that they have been living in Delhi, education, ministry experience, details about the congregation, and their previous religion. Demographic details of believers include factors like gender, age, class, family, education, migration and years that they have been a believer. Table 4.1 tabulates the findings of the leaders while Figure 4.1 presents facts about believers.

Table 4.1. Demographic Details of Participant Leaders

Sl. No.	Participant	Gender	Age	Native state	Years in Delhi	Education	Theological Education	Years of ministry in Delhi	Congregational details (size, number of groups led, status, ethnicity)	Religious background
1	A	M	63	Jharkhand	28	Masters	1 year Course	13	500, leads 2 groups, mixed class, multiethnic	Hindu
2	B	F	48	Bihar	22	Masters	–	15	100, leads 3 groups, lower class, multiethnic	Hindu
3	C	M	28	Uttar Pradesh	9	+2	B.Th	5	250, leads two groups, middle class, multiethnic	Hindu
4	D	M	26	Uttar Pradesh	2	+2	Diploma	2	50, leads one group, lower and poor class, multiethnic	Hindu
5	E	M	46	Kerala	26	BA	M.Div	23	180, leads one group, mixed class, multiethnic	Christian
6	F	M	49	Punjab	26	–	–	3	100, leads two groups, middle class, one ethnic	Hindu
7	G	M	31	Delhi	31	Masters	1year Course	4	250, leads one group, middle class and poor, multiethnic	Christian
8	H	M	41	Tamilnadu	12	Masters	M.Div	1	125, leads one group, middle class, multiethnic	Christian
9	I	M	30	Uttarakhand	7	Masters	6 Months	4	400, leads one group, middle and upper middle, multi ethnic	Hindu
10	J	M	32	Kerala	8	Masters	M.Div	6	325, leads two groups, poor and middle, multi ethnic	Christian

Demographic findings show that all the leaders, except one female, were male. Majority of the leaders are below the age of fifty. Most of the leaders are migrants in Delhi from various states in India. However, six of them have been living in Delhi more than ten years. The educational status of the leaders is very high, in that six of them have a master's degree, though the theological education of the leaders is very minimal, in that six of them have completed one year or less. Only three of them have a master's in theological education. Five of the leaders have more than 250 believers, while 4 of them have more than 100 members. However, most of the leaders have been in ministry in Delhi less than ten years. Six of the leaders themselves are converts from Hinduism, while others were born in Christian families.
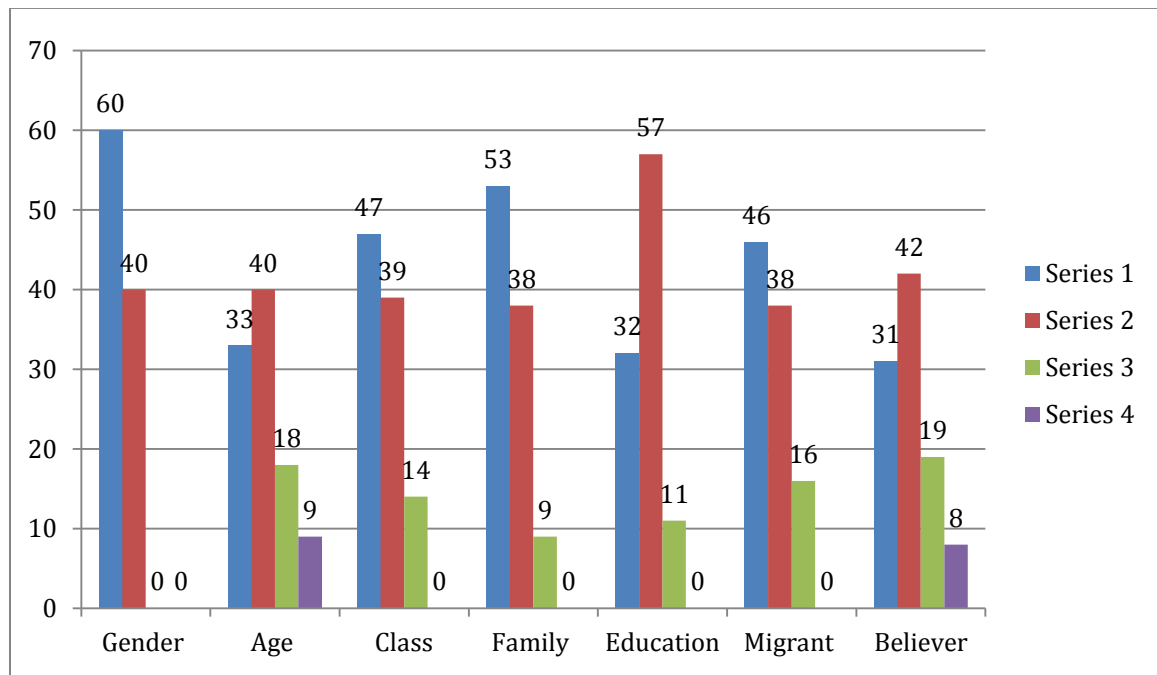

Figure 4.1. Demographic detail of participant believers.

One hundred believers of Christward movement participated in the research. Sixty of them were women, while forty were men. The majority of the participants were between 30–40 years of age, and there were only nine who were above the age of fifty.

Findings show that the majority of the participants were from poor or middle class; only

fourteen participants were from high class while 39 from the middle class and 47 from

the lower or poor. More than half of the respondents (53%) lived as nuclear families,

while only nine lived as joint family. Though the majority of leaders were highly

educated, only 11 percent of the believers had high educational status, and 32 of them

had low educational status. Most of the respondents are migrants in Delhi, while 46 are

first generation, and 38 are second generation migrants. Ninety two of them had been

believers in Christ less than ten years, among whom 31 are less than 3 years.

<div align="center">**Research Question #1**</div>

What are the Characteristics of Christward Movements?

The participants in the interviews and focus group discussions agreed that a

significant number of people from various faith traditions are coming to Christ in Delhi.

Every participant had an exposure to this reality and all agreed that a Christward

movement is evident in every corner or street (*gali*) of Delhi. The focus group interviews

were conducted to find out the characteristics of the movement. I asked questions

pertaining to the characteristics of the movement, and the discussions pointed out several

of them. Characteristics of Christward movements in Delhi were summarized into five

major categories.

Christ–Centered Faith

The most outstanding characteristic of Christward movement is that it is centered

on Christ. In two focus groups, all 10 (100 percent) participants agreed that faith in Christ

is the major emphasis of the movement. In the discussion, it was clear that level of faith

in Christ varied from person to person and group to group, from secret believers to bold

members who publically declared their faith in Christ, irrespective of the consequences they face. There were non–baptized secret believers in Christ, baptized secret believers in Christ, baptized believers in Christ who regularly join worship and publically declare being baptized believers in Christ (See Figure 4.2). In the focus group discussion, the third and fourth categories were favored by both groups. Participant B even said that "they are more spiritual than (traditional) Christians in India." The discussion cleared out that there were hardly any converts who obtained legal status as Christians. However, in the group discussion all of them were accepted as having Christ–centered faith since they did not worship any other god from their "hearts." A follow–up question was asked what is meant by worshiping in the heart? The data revealed that the participant implied that at times, some of these believers may have to sit in a *pooja* (Hindu act of worship) but they do not worship the idol in the *pooja*. According to participant D, "the leaders should take care of the secret believers individually and give them fellowship personally." By this, participant D meant that the secret believers should be cared as other members in the group. Their faith is recognized like that of other believers. According to the findings, the members of Christward movements have a greater faith in Christ than Christians in general in Delhi. Participant B says that "members of Christward movement are stronger in faith than traditional Christians."
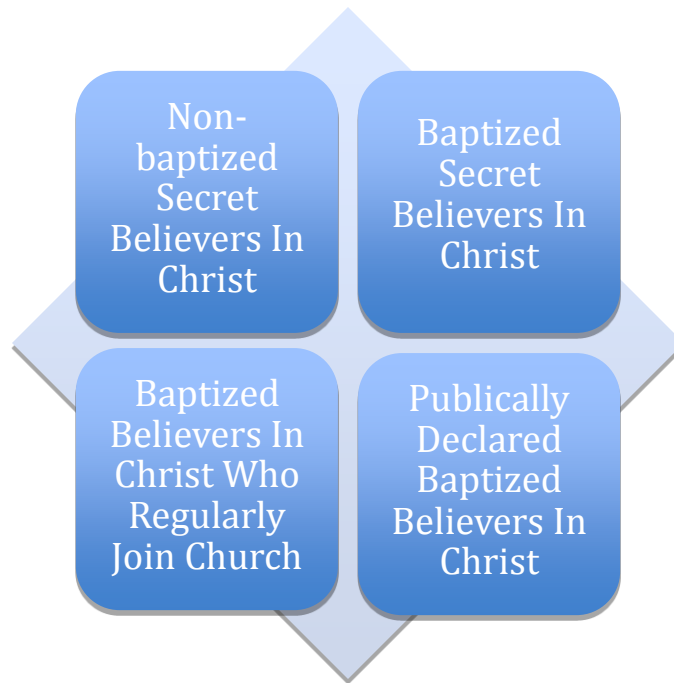
Figure 4.2. Categories of Believers in Christward Movement.

Miracles: Secret of Growth—Applying Power Evangelism

The second question in the focus group discussion was on their view on evangelism in Delhi. The data revealed that power evangelism was regarded more effective than any other method of evangelism. Participant F mentioned that "people come due to miracles and when there is no miracle they stop coming." Often people come just for miracles. Participant J says, "[W]hen the need is not met people do not become strong in faith rather their faith is floating." Various methods of evangelism were identified in the discussion, but even they had to be validated with miracles. However, participant C expressed his reservation in prioritizing power evangelism over other forms and exalting miracle above other factors (this may be due to his personal background because he also did not mention a miracle as a major reason for conversion in the personal interview). The discussion identified that the process of power evangelism has a

unique pattern in Delhi. Believers are the first contact through whom a person is brought

for prayer either to the leader or in special meeting followed by a miracle that take place,

and then follow–up is carried out often leading people to believe in Christ as the Lord.

(See 4.3)

Some go back even after miracle due to lack of follow up

| Non-Beliver | Believers at first contact | Prayer | Miracle | Follow up | Believers in Christ |

Go back if no miracle
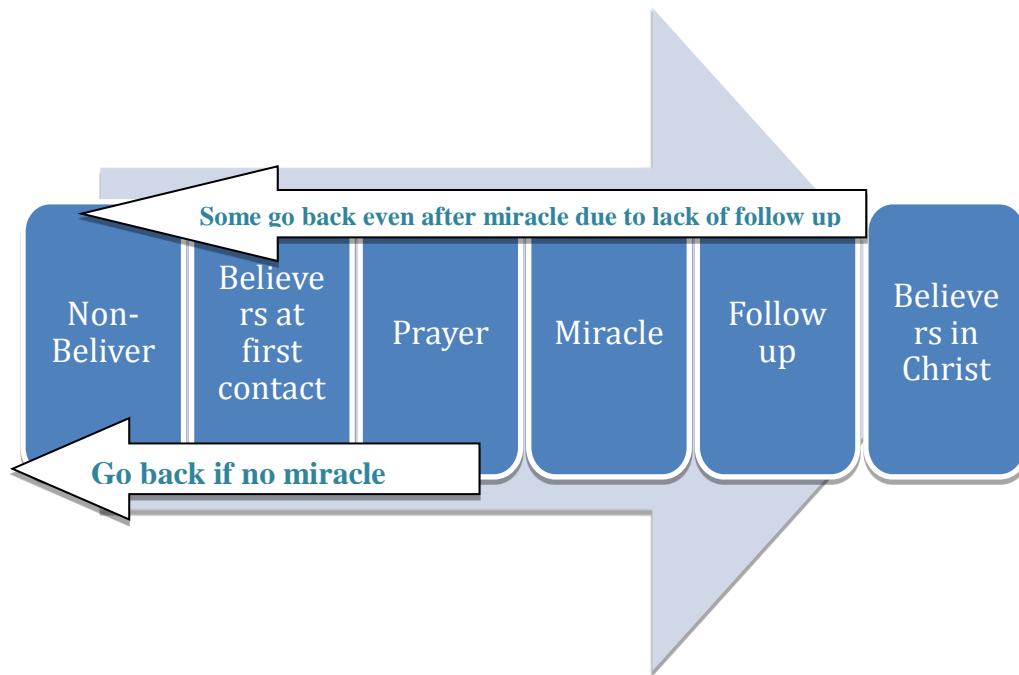
Figure 4.3. Process of Power Evangelism in Delhi.

Hindu/Sikh Believers in Christ

The data from the focus group discussion (questions 4 and 5) revealed that most

(90 percent) of the members of the Christward movement lived in their old tradition with

newfound faith in Christ. Participant B said that "90 percent of the believers carried their

old practices and identity." Continuing with the old identity with Christ was not

impossible but often created tension. Participant C says, "[G]ood fellowship is needed to

confront this struggle." The discussion concluded that we should not cut off people from

their traditions. Uprooting people from their background is dangerous. The group also

said that we should rather teach the believers to respect others and love them. In fact, in the group discussion, participant J said, "[W]e should not ask them to be Christian and there is no need to change religion." It was concluded in the discussion that Indian and contextualized approach is effective. The responses from the focus group discussion indicate various reasons for continuing the old identity of believers (See Figure 4). The discussion also pointed out that these reasons are interrelated to one another in most cases.

Figure 4.4. Reasons for Continuing in Old Identity as Hindu (or Sikh) Believers in Christ.

The findings show that the attitude of the believers to the deity of their previous religion was diverse. Some of the believers perceived the old deity as demonic, while a few hated it as deception. However, some of them showed respect to the old deities. Participant I said that old religion is respected because it is the religion of the parents and

relatives. The members lived as both Hindus (or Sikh), and at the same time were believers in Christ.

Worshiping Groups

Worshiping groups mushroomed in every parts of Delhi through the Christward movement. Focus group data revealed that none of the leaders used the term "church" for their worshiping groups. No participant had built a church building for worship. They used either the term fellowship or *masihi–satsang* for their group. The participants had started a worship group at some point in their lives. The places of worship mentioned in the focus group discussion are open place, house and basements of building and rented halls. Some of these groups were started initially in a house and later moved to a rented hall or basement as it grew in number. Participant B said, "I started prayer in my house with three people but when more people came I moved to a hall in a hotel." These groups are open for all and there is no membership system or register. However, the leader equips people for children ministry, women ministry and youth ministry from their groups. Participant C says that "creative people in any field must be encouraged." These groups also had multiple aspects of ministry led by the capable lay members of the group.

Spiritual Leadership

The data from the response to the focus group discussion question 7 (describe the leadership of Christward movement) showed that the Christward movement is led by spiritual leadership. Participant C defines the leadership of the Christward movement as "spiritual leaders." There is no organized hierarchical leadership structure. The discussion revealed that leadership is carried out by one individual, who has an assistant or a team who functions according to his directions. The leaders of the movement are either

tentmakers or those who are in full time ministry. The functioning of the group is the responsibility of the leader. The major thriving force that keeps the leader motivated is a passion, burden and vision for souls. Leaders are expected to give individual care and fellowship even to secret believers. The leaders work at the grass root level in the field. They have started and take care of one or more groups in different locations in Delhi.

Research Question #2

What are the impulses behind Christward movement in Delhi?

The second research question focused on the factors behind the conversion to Christ in Delhi. From the ministry experience of the leaders, and the statements of both the leaders and believers, the data for reasons of Christward movement were gathered together through individual interviews and questionnaires. The reasons are arranged in a descending order in this chapter.

Miracles

In the interview, nine out of ten (90 percent) participants, except participant C, stated that miracles are a vital reason for the growth of Christward movement in Delhi. The questionnaires revealed that 81 percent of believers agreed that healing and other miracles in the lives of many people paved the way for conversion to Christ in Delhi. One participant in the interview stated that "[m]iracles are bringing people to Christ. No eternal teaching is attracting people, but people look for result first" (Participant A).
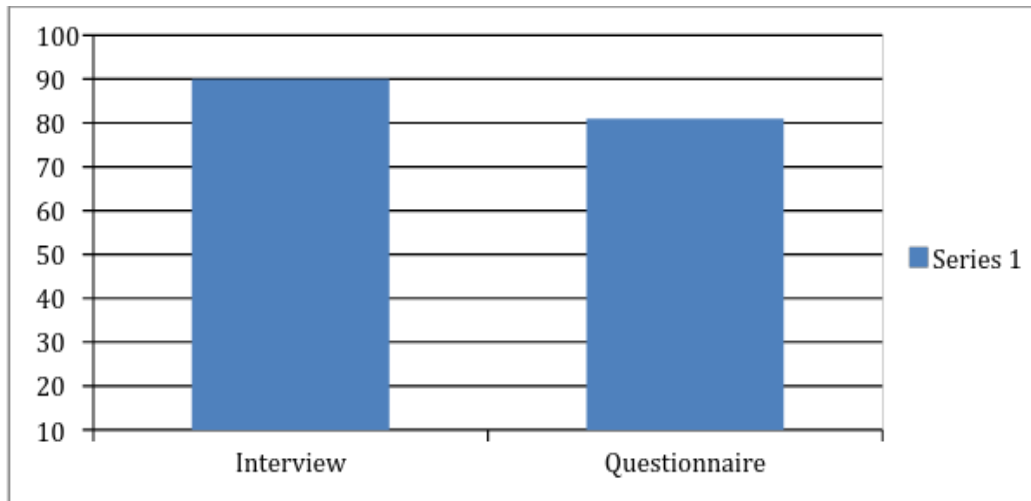
Figure 4.5. Percent of Participant Who Accepted Miracles.

In the study, participants identified different categories of miracles (See Figure 4.6). The data revealed that healing is the most common miracle in Delhi. 90 percent of the participants in the interview stated healing as a major reason for people to come to Christ, whereas 76 percent of the participants in the questionnaires identified healing as the most common miracle. One of the participants mentioned the story of Raju Pandey who was mad and chained at the age of ten. His parents brought him for prayer and God healed him miraculously. Today, he is serving as a nursing tutor in a college (Participant B).

The research showed that exorcism was another major miracle that brought people in Delhi to Christ. 60 percent of the leaders mentioned in the interview that exorcism is a reason for people to come to Christ while 67 percent of the participants in the questionnaires states exorcism as a factor behind conversion in Delhi. One of the leaders shared a story that one girl was brought to his house for deliverance from demon possession. She had been suffering from extreme fear and memory loss when she was brought for prayer. When he began to pray, she started to manifest a demon. She was

delivered from the demonic possession; consequently, she was healed and came back to normal life. Because of this particular incident, her entire family and some relatives came to Christ (Participant J). In the interview, 50 percent of the people felt instant deliverance from addiction through prayer as a reason for conversion, while only 40 percent of believers mentioned it as a cause for conversion to Christ. On the other hand, while only 40 percent of leaders viewed material blessings as a reason, 70 percent of the believers stated that material blessings are a major reason in leading people to Christ. It is noteworthy here that 10 percent of the leaders and 19 percent of the believers did not consider a miracle as a major reason for people to come to Christ in Delhi. Though it was not identified as a reason by the leaders; 20 percent of the believers mentioned freedom from the bondage of the witchcraft as a reason for the conversion of some people.
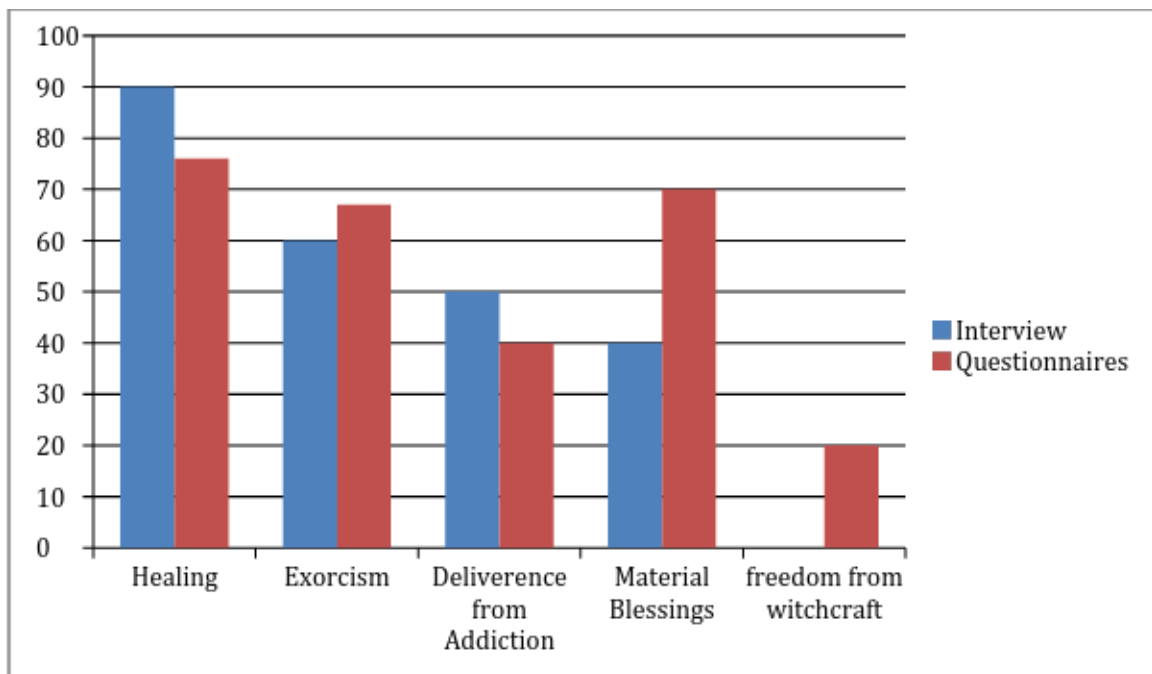
Figure 4.6. Various Common Miracles in Delhi.

Urban Sociological Factors

The unique urban sociology in contemporary India has created conducive context for people to accept Christ. Except one, all leaders in interview (90 percent) agreed that social situation of the city is contributing to conversion to Christ. Even in the focus group discussion, this was identified as a major reason for people to come to Christ in Delhi. However, one leader did not mention about it in the interview and was in disagreement with this thought even in focus group discussion. It is presumed that his educational qualification and understanding of "spirituality" was the major reason for being silent about sociological factors. It is interesting that believers did not perceive sociological factors as a reason for conversion to Christ. Only 30 percent of the participants in the questionnaire found any significant value in it. This is primarily because they perceived faith in Christ as the work of the Holy Spirit in their life. The emphasis was on spiritual aspect of their conversion rather than the social factors.
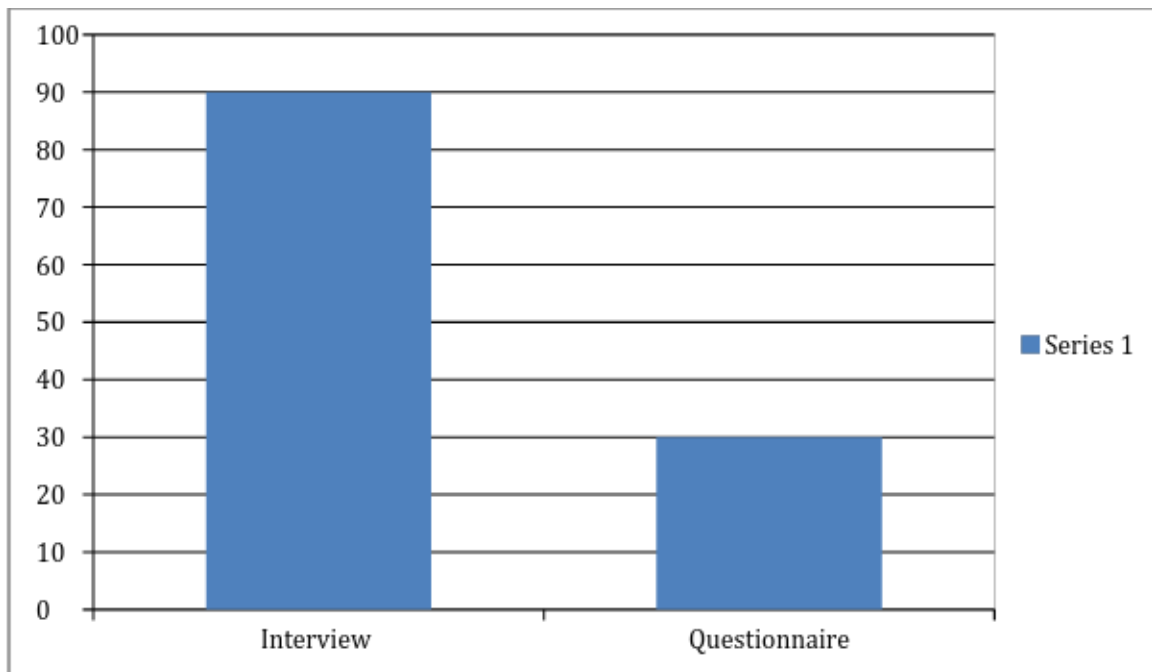
Figure 4.7. Sociological Factors Contributing to Conversion in Delhi.

The findings revealed that there are some major sociological factors contributing to the conversion of people to Christ such as migration, nuclear family structure and pressure of city life (See Figure 4.8). All nine leaders (90 percent) mentioned migration as major factor behind conversion in Delhi. Some of their groups fully consisted of migrants. The locals were not more than 10 percent of the total believers in any group. Even the leader who did not perceive sociological factors as a reason for conversion ironically said that his group consisted of migrants. Participant B said that "migrants are free to adapt to different communities." "Migrants are psychologically disturbed, stressed in city life and experience loneliness so they long for fellowship", says participant C, who agrees that there are more conversions among migrants. Only 27 percent of believers wrote migration as a reason for conversion. Out of 30 percent who recognized sociological factors as a reason for conversion, only 27 percent found migration as a reason for conversion, but the disparity is that in the demographic details, 91 percent said they have migrated to Delhi or their parents were migrants in Delhi.

According to emerging data, nuclear family structure was another major social factor for the conversion of people. 70 percent of the leaders said in the interview that nuclear families are coming to Christ. This is mainly because of the decision–making capacity and freedom from the control of joint family due to distance. Participant H says that "[m]igrants do not have peer pressure so they come to Christ easily." According to participant F "Nuclear families have freedom when extended families are not with them." The respondent was probably indicating that nuclear families can use this freedom when they come to Christ. In the demographic details most of the participants mentioned that there are only two, three or four members in their family, indicating nuclear families.

Moreover, the age group also indicates that most of them are young families. In the questionnaire data, 30 percent of the respondents said nuclear family structure helped them to easily get along with the faith in Christ.

Participants also mentioned that pressure of city life brings people to Christ. Most of the leaders (80 percent) said people come to Christ in search of peace, fellowship, acceptance and comfort. City life has caused people to go without proper food, job pressure, sleeplessness, depression and loneliness. Participant D observes that only 20 percent of believers are from high class and 80 percent are from middle and lower class people.   Although in questionnaires, only 30 percent valued the sociological reasons behind conversion. When they were asked how do you come to Christ? Most of them mentioned pressure of city life as a reason. It implies that people underestimate the social factors in their conversion in comparison to the work of Holy Spirit.
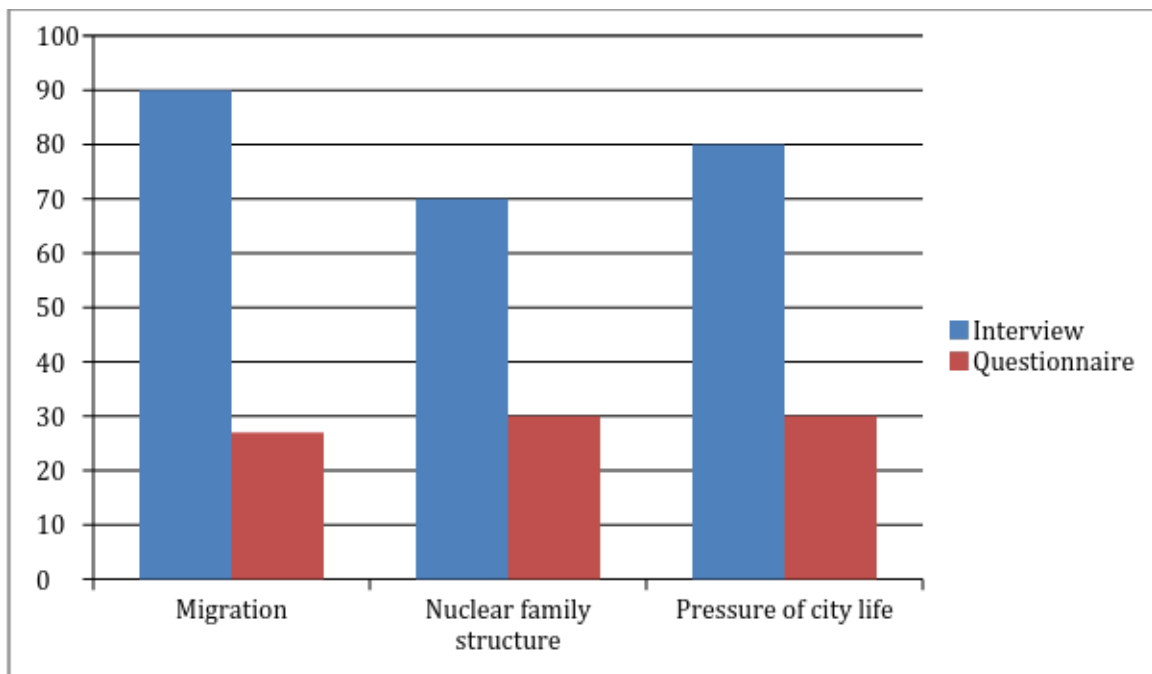
Figure 4.8. Major Sociological Factors Contributing to the Growth of Christward Movement.

Evangelism

Eight leaders (80 percent) identified evangelism as a major reason for the

conversion of the people. Leaders identified various methods of evangelism as effective

in Delhi such as television evangelism, friendship evangelism, family focus, folk music,

house visiting, object evangelism, evangelism through social work, reaching out to

women and electronic media (see Figure 4.9). The focus group discussion revealed that

miracles had to be accompanied with these methods, at least in most cases. Both the

leaders (70 percent) and believers (76 percent) emphasized the role of lay believers in

leading people to Christ. They said it was a lay believer who worked as a bridge in

bringing people to Christ. Lay believers shared along with the gospel their story of

conversion or story of another believer's life. Lay believers invited people for a gospel

program or introduced their leader as a spiritual *guru* who can bring solution to their

problem through Christ.
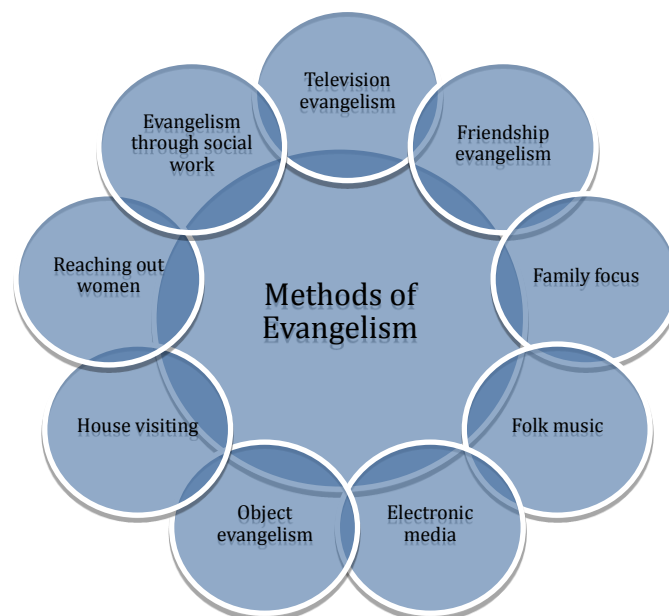
Figure 4.9. Methods of Evangelism.

Worshiping Community

Six leaders (60 percent) recognized the presence of Worshiping community in every colony as a major factor behind Christward movement in Delhi. In the questionnaires, 74 percent mentioned that prayer group in their neighborhood was the reason for them to come to Christ. Unlike the mainline churches, the leaders mentioned that there is a great sense of fellowship and intimacy maintained in the group. One of the leaders repeatedly emphasized love and compassion throughout the interview (Participant A). Also there is a huge amount of freedom for believers in these groups. These groups do not follow any particular Christian rituals, says participant G. It emphasized on growing in Christ. Moreover, the leaders agreed that they do not project the group as a church. Because of its open nature, it attracted people.

Openness to Christ

In the interview it was revealed that one of the major reasons for the growth of Christward movement was openness to Christ. Six leaders (60 percent) stated that people in Delhi are open to Christ. In focus group discussions, all the participants agreed that people have a general perception that they can find answers to their problems in Jesus. It was vivid that when one person brought this as a reason, others immediately supported it and carried the discussion further. One participant said, "[H]arvest is plenty; people are ready and just need to reach them out" (Participant B). The data revealed three major factors behind this openness such as work of the Holy Spirit across the city (including miracles, signs and wonders as mentioned in Figure 4.5), presence of worshiping community in every colony and having a friend or relative who is already a believer (See Figure 4.10). Participant C says that "many people in the metro revealed to him that they

have a friend or relative who has become a believer in Christ. Except a few, most of them

were very positive about Christ and liked prayer for their life." Unlike ever before, people

are receptive to Christ in Delhi.
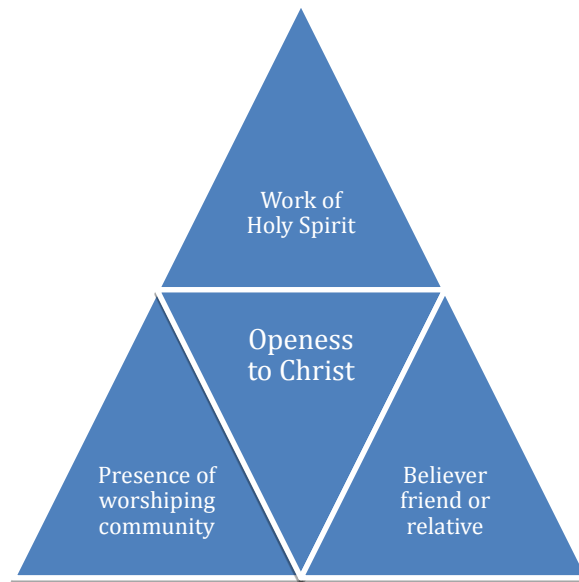
Figure 4.10. Reasons for Openness to Christ in Delhi.

Research Question #3

What are the needs of Christward movement?

What are the needs of Christward movements in Delhi? The third research

question explored the needs of Christward movement in order to accelerate the movement

in Delhi. The data from individual interviews and questionnaires contributed to address

this question. The presentation of the data brought in major themes on a priority basis and

also incorporated differences and silences during the collection of data.

Empowering Spiritual Leadership

The findings indicate that there is a great need to empower spiritual leadership of

Christward movement. 100 percent of the leaders in the interview mentioned the need for

building spiritual leadership. In the focus group, the participants restated several

leadership needs. These needs fall into two categories such as leadership needs of the

movement and needs of individual leaders.

Table 4.2. Leadership Needs of Christward movement in Delhi

Sl. No	Participants	Leadership Needs
1.	Participant A	Leaders need certain values such as love, compassion, cleverness to deal with opposition, faithfulness and fear of the Lord, power of God.
2	Participant B	Creativity in ministry, burden for people, commitment, prayer and intercession, online bible courses, government recognition as a Christian leader, anointing, strong pulpit.
3	Participant C	Christ–like heart, research framework, know people from heart and their cultural heritage, target–oriented, renewal, hang on to the Lord, not conservative, talk to self, enjoy inner wounds.
4	Participant D	Good management skill, seminars, team support, in–depth teaching of word of God, prayer life, spiritual family, higher–level dedication, financial care, love and discipline, anointing.
5	Participant E	Faithfulness, commitment for ministry, friendly nature, boldness to face persecution.
6	Participant F	Fellowship with other leaders, finance, wisdom to handle persecution, power of God.
7	Participant G	Pray with target, team support, family responsibilities, financial needs, lay leaders, recognition, encouragement, handling accusation, spiritual strength.
8	Participant H	Power of God, wisdom, anointing of the Holy Spirit, legal assistance, overcoming fear of persecution, prayer, training in Word of God.
9	Participant I	Teachability, satisfy people, preparation, global challenge, preparing a team, anointing.
10	Participant J	Holiness, right motive, commitment, lay leadership, training local people, prayer, family testimony.

The findings show that leadership qualities are the most important area of

development in the lives of the spiritual leaders in Delhi. The participants identified

qualities such as love, compassion, faithfulness, commitment, fear of God, burden for

people, Christ–like heart, prayer and intercession, enjoying inner wounds, dedication,

discipline, teachable, spiritual family, friendly nature, boldness, holiness, and right

motives to be developed in the life of the leaders. It is the individual life of the leader where improvement needs to take place. In a spiritual leadership model, the qualities of a *guru* are the most vital aspect. The leader is also expected to have spiritual strength. The participants repeatedly mentioned in the table above about the anointing of the Holy Spirit upon the leader (70 percent). The data repeatedly indicates (refers to Figure 4.4) that miracles are major aspect of Christward movement. The spiritual leadership is also expected to educate themselves through training programs, seminars and online course in the study, 50 percent. Table 4.2 reveals that spiritual leaders should give in–depth teaching of the Word of God to the believers. Participant B said in the interview that "leaders should keep the pulpit strong." Spiritual leadership should also develop multiple leaderships through training lay leadership and training local people. Participants also said that leaders should have wisdom to handle all the situations as well as obtain recognition from the government as Christian leader. The findings show that the leaders should have management skills and should be target–oriented. Four leaders (40 percent) said in the interview that leaders should develop a team support from the members of their own group.

Satsang—**Fellowship (Sacred) Gathering**

The data indicates that all the leaders agreed for the need for a commonly accepted pattern for corporate worship. Mainline churches are not attracting new believers in Delhi. Therefore, converts exist as independent Worshiping communities or groups in different locations in Delhi. It was vivid in the interview that these groups did not follow any common pattern rather had a diversified way of functioning. In focus group discussions when I asked the participants to narrate corporate worship of

Christward movement (question 8), they mentioned different models that they were

following. The discussion went on until it reached the conclusion that the differences

created lot of confusion and chaos among the believers; therefore, the movement needs a

common pattern or few patterns that can be followed apart from the traditional churches.

In the interview (question 10), they were asked to explain an ideal Worshiping

community for Christward movement. Their views are summarized in the table below:

Table 4.3. Views on Model *Ecclesia* or Corporate Worship for Christward Movement in Delhi

Sl. No	Participants	Views on Corporate Worship (*Ecclesia*)
1.	Participant A	Use the term *satsang* instead of church. No bound. No ritualism rather follow word of God. No membership. Not necessarily on Sunday. Loving group.
2	Participant B	Open ground, no restriction, not project as church, No walls that all (religious people) can come, No membership, not only on Sundays, *Satsang*
3	Participant C	Hidden believers, word of God, good worship, opportunity for capable people, *Masihisatsang*
4	Participant D	Spirituality, discipline, word of God, good worship,
5	Participant E	Friendly love, no membership, fellowship, not term as Christians but only as believers,
6	Participant F	House fellowship or hall fellowship, no fixed order of worship, no membership
7	Participant G	Not traditional pattern, no committee, church building is good. no membership
8	Participant H	Fellowship or *satsang*, no membership, no committee, word of God, worship,
9	Participant I	Fellowship, grow together, no committee just appoint capable people, good teaching
10	Participant J	Fellowship or *satsang*, culturally relevant, use term believers not Christians, house church to *satsang* group,

The data shows that the participants unanimously expressed that the corporate

worship of Christward movement should have a different pattern from the traditional

concept of church in India. Leaders (100 percent) said that the collective worship has to

be suitable for the movement. They expressed that there should be good worship, strong

teaching of the Word of God, relevant order of worship for each group instead of

traditional liturgical worship. According to participant C, good worship should have new songs according to the tone (appetite) of the people.

Table 4.3 points out the administrative system of the corporate worship. The participants said there is no need of membership. Participant F says, "[W]hen people come regular for sometimes (more than a month) then they are considered as members. They did offer membership (80 percent) to the believers, and some of them did not keep any membership register (which is the legal record about the members of a church). Those who kept membership register did not encourage people to take membership. The follow–up question indicated that the reason is because of the legal procedure in offering membership (also refer to Figure 4.11). It helped leaders to avoid the legal procedure. Participants (70 percent) also mentioned that there is no need of committee (or elders). Capable individuals are asked to help in various administrative works. This refers to the spiritual leadership pattern mentioned in Table 4.2. Since there is no membership, the term "believer" is used instead of Christian (participant J). However, one of the participants noted that it created difficulty in carrying out discipline (Participant D).

Except one participant, all other leaders (90 percent) felt that a church building is not an appropriate place to gather for corporate worship. A house (when the group is small) or a hall was considered as suitable place for worship. In order to avoid the identity as a church, three leaders (30 percent) preferred days other than Sunday for corporate worship. Participant B says that "other days are not perceived as church." Instead of church, 80 percent of the leaders said *satsang* or fellowship as a better term for Christward movement. One of the participant said, "In north India *satang* attract more people" (Participant J). When a follow–up question was asked, it was said that non–

Christians normally hesitate to come to a church. *Satsang* also helps to avoid ritualism, as mentioned by participant A. In a *satsang* model, there is no wall of a church, thus all are welcomed (Participant B).

The respondents in the questionnaires mentioned that Christward movement needed an effective pattern of *ecclesia* 80 percent of them mentioned that there should be freedom for participants. According to one respondent "there should freedom to participate in the worship of any group as there is no rule that one should come in this temple and should not go to other temple." Freedom in *ecclesia* is the major need from the perspective of the believers.

Creative Evangelism

According to 70 percent of the leaders (interview), Christward movement needs creative evangelism. Three of them (30 percent) disagreed with creative evangelism, except storytelling, and hold the opinion that what is needed is the demonstration of the power of God in evangelism. In other words, they valued power evangelism against strategic approach in evangelism. In the interview the leaders mentioned various types of creative evangelism such as storytelling, Debora movement, object learning, electronic devices and social web approach. There is a possible disparity here because power evangelism is mentioned as a characteristic of the Christward movement. Miracles are unquestionably vital in the movement. The examination revealed that more than disparity, leaders had the perception that power evangelism is already applied throughout the movement but there is also need for other methods.

Figure 4.11. Creative Evangelism Methods.

The data reveals that many people came to Christ through a lay believer who shared his or her story in Christ with them. When lay people shared what Jesus did in their lives, then it encourages non–believers to come to Christ. Figure 4.6 shows that 85.5 percent agreed miracles as reason for people coming to Christ. Lay people should be encouraged to share these stories of miracles either in their lives or in the lives of fellow believers with non–Christians. As the Holy Spirit is at work all through the city (Figure 4.10) the non–Christians often receive miracles which demonstrate that Jesus is Lord. One participant commented on it as a "different way of doing personal evangelism." The gospel is not fully shared by the lay person, but just a story in life is shared, and then gospel is shared by spiritual *guru*.

The Debora movement is term used by a leader (Participant B) for evangelism by the women to women. 50 percent of the leaders expressed that women reaching out to women is vital in the context of Delhi. One of the participants shared how the believer women could reach out to women cleaning bottles in a factory (Participant B). Participant

C mentioned in the interview that we should use the expertise of women by empowering them. According to participant H women ministry has a vital role in evangelism.

Five leaders (50 percent) viewed evangelism through social web as creative method. Social web of a person is people who are connected to him or her in some social aspect such as relatives, neighbors, friends, coworkers etc. These networks can be used to reach out with gospel.

Object evangelism is another creative method of evangelism. The data revealed that it has been very effective method of evangelism, especially in the slums. Various versions of object evangelism were mentioned by participants in the interview such as using pictures for evangelism, evangelism through short dramas, evangelism by using commonly used things at home and panel graphs.

The findings from questionnaires indicate that they needed more training and resources for evangelism. Electronic devices distribution required supply of such equipment. 40 percent of the respondent (women) said that the role of women should be recognized in evangelism and empower them for it. 68 percent of believers also mentioned that there should be evangelistic programs and events where they can invite their friends and relatives.

Legal Guidance and Help

Findings indicate that leaders of Christward movement needed legal guidance and help to continue their ministry. 70 percent of the participants identified legal help as vital need in one or more areas in their ministry. In the focus group discussion, this was recognized as a need that leaders are facing. From the data, five different areas are identified where legal guidance and help is needed such as registration and management

of an organization, confronting persecution, baptism and religious documentation,

marriage and funeral of believers and recognition and license from government.

Figure 4.12. Areas Where Legal Guidance and Help is Needed.

The data revealed the Christward movement existed as independent individual

Worshiping communities in different parts of the city (Refers to Figure 4.7). Since these

are not part of traditional Christianity in India or any church, these groups have to get

their organization registered in the government. Moreover, they function as individual

groups so each of them has to get their legal documents completed. Earlier this study

revealed that though many of these groups started as house fellowships, they moved to

halls as they grow. Legal registration is a must for a larger group. In the focus group, a

discussion on registration and management was very active because the participants

realized its significance.

Persecution is expected in ministry in North India. So, participant leaders (50 percent) felt that legal help should be extended wherever the need arise, but the remaining 50 percent were not interested in legal procedure to face persecution. They emphasized a wise and careful approach in evangelism to avoid persecution; however, they kept silence on legal help in persecution. This was evident in the focus group discussion that 50 percent of the leaders disagreed about going for legal step during persecution. They perceived persecution as part of the ministry in the Bible. They felt that we should overcome it spiritually through prayer and fasting. In Figure 4.7 we have seen that the spiritual interpretation has led people to deny the role of sociological factors behind conversion. In the same way the spiritual inclination led participants to feel that during persecution legal help is not needed. It indicates that Christward movement depends on a divine element rather than human aspects for its growth and survival.

40 percent of the leaders felt the need of legal guidance in marriage and funerals as well as in baptism and documentation. On the other hand, 60 percent leaders were silent about the need of legal help in these matters. This difference was due to the fact that in many groups, marriages were conducted either in the non—Christian religious tradition of the believer or in the court. Marriages were mostly not conducted as a Christian wedding. One of the participants even said that at times, marriage was conducted both in the temple and in a Christian way (Participant I). A funeral was also conducted in a non–Christian tradition in many cases. One of the participants stated that "we have nothing to do with non–spiritual matters" (Participant F), referring to marriage and funerals. 60 percent of the leaders perceived baptism as a spiritual act and so do not need any legal record of it. Individuals are not required to take membership in group

following baptism. Because of the legal trouble, no records of baptism were kept in the congregation. Participant I mentioned that "next generation of believers (children who will be born in future) can make changes in the documents if it is needed." This is also evident in Figure 4.5 where Christward movement maintains the old social identity of the believers.

The data in the questionnaire revealed that believers also mentioned about the need of legal help and guidance. 56 percent of the believers expressed their desire for legal assistance. The respondents of questionnaires mentioned about persecution and threat that they face in life. One of the participants expressed the grief that "when persecuted no one comes to help them and they were left alone." 23 percent of believers also mentioned that legal assistance should be given for baptism as well as documentation during marriage and funeral. The data from the questionnaires (10 percent) also mentioned that legal help is needed to ensure the reservation facility from government for schedule caste even after becoming believers.

Spiritual Maturity

The data from the questionnaires revealed spiritual maturity as a major need of Christward movement. 70 percent of the believers mentioned that spiritual maturity is one of their greatest needs in life. The respondents (60 percent) said that they struggle in reflecting Christ through their life. Participants also mentioned the need for love and unity among the members of the Christward movement. Transformation in life is an important aspect of spiritual maturity. However, 68 percent of the participants believed that transformation is a long–term process. In the questionnaires members of Christward movement expressed their desire for right teaching of the Word of God.

Summary of Major Findings

The findings of this study contribute to accelerate Christward movement among urban dwellers in North India, specifically Delhi. Major findings are drawn from the data collected through focus group discussions, individual interview and questionnaires regarding the characteristics, reasons and needs of Christward movement in Delhi. The following are the major findings of this study.

1. Christward movement needs well–qualified spiritual leadership to accelerate in Delhi. Spiritual leadership is centered around the concept of *guru*, the spiritual man or teacher. They are the people who run the movement. Some necessary steps should be taken to empower spiritual leadership of Christward movement and their families.

2. Miracles, signs and wonders should be emphasized in Christward movement. Healing, exorcism, deliverance and immediate blessings play a significant role in bringing people to Christ. Therefore miracles and demonstration of the power of God should be focused in Christward movement.

3. *Satsang* or fellowship gathering are essential for accelerating Christward movement. A pattern/s of corporate worship, in consideration of its unique identity, should be developed for *satsang* in Delhi that can be followed by the Christward movement.

4. Christward movement A Renewed Identity: Hindu (Sikh) Believer in Christ.

5. The Christward movement should make use of the sociological factors contributing to the conversion in Delhi. The urbanization has removed several hindrances that prevented people socially from coming to Christ. Moreover, the city has changed life of people that they are open for gospel. The Christward movement should make use of these social factors for its growth in Delhi.

6. Evangelism is vital for the growth of Christward movement. Creative evangelism along with power evangelism should be applied in a collaborative way in Delhi. The methods of evangelism in existence in Delhi also should be incorporated in it. The advantage of time of receptivity should be used in carrying out evangelism.

7. Maturity of believers is vital for accelerating Christward movement in Delhi. The believers continue to live in their old identity. It creates a lot of challenge in their life. They can easily fall into compromise and syncretism. There is only a thin line between their old social identity and faith in Christ. Therefore all efforts should be made to keep them strong and committed to their faith in Christ.

 The expertise of a legal aspect should be made available to Christward movement. There is hardly any steps taken to cater legal assistance to Christward movement. The leaders should be ensured about the support in the legal side.

Review of the Chapter

This chapter presented the data collected through Focus group discussion, interview and questionnaires in a systematic way. The data arranged in a domain and themes brings out the answers to the research questions. The chapter also provided a summary of major findings at the end.

CHAPTER 5

LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

Christward movement among urban dwellers in North India is a recent
phenomenon. Cities are open to Christ in North India today. In Delhi, a huge number of
people are coming to Christ. The focus of missions in India has been for rural people over
the years. Urban dwellers were considered as irreligious generally and non–receptive to
the gospel by missions. They were often treated as materialistic and non–approachable
with the gospel. But today, urban dwellers are becoming more receptive to the gospel.
McGavran says when movements to Christ are manifested, if there is no systematic
research on it, then it may die out along the way. Therefore, it is inevitable to do a
research on Christward movement among urban dwellers in the recent past in North India
so that we can accelerate the movement. Moreover, Christward movement in Delhi is
strategically vital for North Indian missions. City people are very influential and
decision–makers in India. In describing the dynamic of city people in India, Manokaran
sates that when city people lead a movement, it becomes successful (83). Urban missions
have the potential to carry out effective rural mission through rural migrants in cities.
Therefore, Christward movement in Delhi is a God given opportunity for missions in
India. We should take every possible step to soar with the waves of this movement.

In spite of its strategic significance, there was no systematic research on
Christward movement. The movement, both the leaders and believers, lacks insights on
leadership, balancing miracles, corporate worship, identity of believers and social factors.

In this research a systematic study on Christward movement is carried out with a purpose to accelerate Christward movement in Delhi.

Major Findings

Accountable Spiritual Leadership or Accountable *Guruship*

The leadership pattern of Christward movement is spiritual leadership which is often in line with Indian *guruship.* In the contemporary sense of the word *guru* is understood as spiritual leader who represent god and has the knowledge of divine scripture. Vishal Mangalwadi states that "millions of people, young and old, rich and poor, illiterate and sophisticated, bow before them (*guru)* believing in them completely and obeying them implicitly" (5). Often *guru* possesses extra ordinary capacity to perform miracles. Devotees normally follow *gurus* without questioning them and submit to their spiritual authority. Christward movement also share this pattern of leadership to a great extent. I have observed that leaders of Christward movement do not follow any *ecclesiastical* leadership pattern in their life. In the research it was clear that Christward movement was basically independent groups of Worshiping communities led by individuals who were the leaders of the movement. I observed that some of them had never been to any biblical or theological training program, did not have any ministry experience prior to their leadership with this particular group, they were neither ordained nor recognized by any Christian church or organization as leaders. It was just that the people came for worship and they became leader of the movement. In the interview, all the leaders felt that one of the greatest needs of the movement is to strengthen spiritual leadership pattern. There is a great need to unite these leaders, empower them and build

their capacity so that they become effective spiritual leaders or *gurus* of these movements.

The leadership of the missionary congregation and leadership of the house church model, described in the Literature Review, reflect the leadership by the ordinary lay people. The converts of mass movements and people movements were the leaders of the church and often had a locally developed church structure and function. However, the major difference in the Christward movement and the literature reviewed is the role of a higher level leadership. Christward movement lacks a higher level leadership. In the congregation model, according to Newbegin, ministerial priesthood is ordained to nourish and sustain the priesthood of people (235). In the house church model also there is a higher level of leadership above lay leaders. In the first century, apostles were the overall leaders of the church who appointed elders to lead house churches. The *satsang* model, however, had a guru leader or leaders who run it, but it does not consider itself as a church or congregation, or even as corporate worship.

In the New Testament we see leadership is always accompanied with accountability and recognition. The leadership of Jesus was similar to *guru* leadership in India. At the same time, He was sent by the Father. Jesus also appointed apostles who reported to Jesus about their ministry. Apostles appointed elders who remained accountable to apostles. In Jerusalem church apostles had appointed elders to minister on the table who functioned under the authority of apostleship. In Lystra, the church continued to grow so much that on their return to Antioch, Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in the church (Acts 14:23). The church was established in Ephesus, and there were elders, overseers and shepherds in the church (Acts 21:17, 28). Thus leadership in the

New Testament church was recognized by higher leaders and accountability was maintained.

The above discussion points out that Christward movement needs to refine its leadership pattern. While it may continue the spiritual leadership pattern, it also needs incorporate accountability into its system. A higher level of leadership is necessary who may recognize (ordain) and nourish the spiritual leadership pattern. Such a leadership pattern can be developed through a mixture of situational leadership and charismatic leadership theory (Page No. 61). There is a great opportunity to empower the leadership.

Miracles, Signs and Wonders and Christward Movement

In my observation, miracles, signs and wonders play a significant role in the growth of Christward movement in Delhi. The study shows that a large number of people came to Christ because of physical healing that they received. Some have also come through exorcism and miraculous deliverance from addiction. One miracle in a person often resulted in the conversion of the family, friends and neighbors. The incredible potential of miracle stories to attract people to Christ is realized through this study. Therefore miracles and demonstration of the power of God should be focused in Christward movement.

The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 reveals that demonstration of the power of God played a major role in the conversion of the people to Christ. There are five different categories of demonstration of the power of God mentioned in Chapter 2 such as power evangelism, signs and wonders, healing, exorcism and power encounter. These are commonly understood as miracles among Christward movements in Delhi. Chapter two emphasizes the role of miracles in the growth of the church. Wimber states, "The

explanation of the gospel comes with demonstration of God's power through sings and wonders" (46). Wagner comments that "Christianity swept through the Roman Empire because the people could see with their own eyes that Jesus did miracles greater than any gods they had known of" (80). Undoubtedly the literature review shows that miracles have significant role in bringing people to Christ.

In the Bible we see miracles, signs and wonders attracted people to God. Many people followed Jesus because of the healing they received (John 9, Luke 18:35ff). Signs and wonders caused many to put their faith in Christ (John 2). When Jesus expelled demons the delivered believed in Him (Luke 4). The apostles performed several signs and wonders in Jerusalem (Act 2:41–43, 5:12) and the church continued to grow in the city (Act 8:6–13). Acts is full of signs and wonders of exorcism and healing (Green 189). In several locations such as Samaria, Lystra, Philippi and Ephesus miracles as well as signs and wonders accompanied with the gospel led many people to believe in Christ (Acts 5, 16, 17).

However, miracles have to be balanced with the teachings of the word of God. Miracles empty of gospel presentation would not produce intended result of the research. If not careful in teaching, miracles can reduce Jesus into another miracle–working god which in turn would affect the Lordship of Christ. People who are attracted only by the miracles and void of word of God hardly become committed believers in Christ. So the miracles need to accompany with the teaching of the word of God. Miracles should not be an end in itself rather a means to confirm the word of God and bring people to Christ. Christward movement would accelerate further by focus on miracles along with the presentation of gospel and teaching of the word of God.

*Masihi Satsang***: A Pattern for Corporate Worship in Christward Movement**

Masihi satsang means Christian Fellowship. I have observed that those who are part of the Christward movement never identified themselves with traditional churches. The corporate worship of Christward movement functioned as fellowship or *satsang.* It was vivid in the study that *satsang* was not just another term for the church but they had a different pattern of structure and function. The leader was sometimes entitled as a *guru* or *bhayya* (elder brother) and at times even as pastor. Irrespective of the term they functioned as spiritual leader (*guru).* There are no elders or committee like a church but run by spiritual leader or *guru* like a *satsang*. Though these fellowships met initially in houses, they moved to halls as their number increased. Songs, music and prayers were given a significant amount of time in the corporate worship and often miracles were expected to happen. There was no membership emphasis in this fellowship rather the regular attendees were considered as part of the group. I found out from the study that Christward movement is in the process of developing a corporate worship pattern similar to *satsang* in the Indian context. But at the same time, the movement did not have any unified pattern of corporate worship and differed one another significantly.

In the attempt to develop a relevant model of ecclesiology in the pluralistic Indian context, the literature review has considered three different models such as *satsang* or fellowship groups, missionary congregation and house church model. These models are applicable for Christward movements in Delhi in varied manner. Most of the worshiping groups in Christward movement in Delhi started in homes. Initially it was patterned after the house church model. The house church model enables multiplication of groups. The feasibility of the house church makes it a preferred model for most of the groups in the

initial stage. The Literature Review has discussed in detail the structure and function of the house church model pointing out its missional and practical relevance in the Indian context. The intimacy and fellowship in the house church model has to be adapted into Christward movement in Delhi. Missionary congregation is also a relevant model for Christward movement. It emphasizes on mobilizing whole church into the mission of God. Similarly Christward movement should mobilize believers for mission. I observed in the study that lay believers are those who function as first contact to non—Christians. Christward movement should motivate everyone to carry out the mission of God. The *satsang* model allows Christward movement to remain detached from the traditional Christianity. It gives more acceptance in society, and has a contextual approach. A unique way of functioning of *satsang* along with its spiritual leadership and absence of membership register has been discussed in Chapter 2. *Satsang* model struggles to maintain intimacy and to overcome anonymity.

In the book of Acts, the church took a different form from the traditional Jewish temple worship as well as the worship in pagan religion. The church in the book of Acts was patterned after a social institution in the Roman Empire such as *oikonomia* (household association) or *koinonia* (voluntary association) (Meeks 30). The households became the bedrock of the New Testament Church (Acts 1:13; 2:46; 5:42; 12:1–2; 10:1ff; 16:13–15; 16:31–34; 18:18). The church shared several characteristics with voluntary association such as membership, intimacy, fellowship meal and initiation (like baptism) (Meeks 78; Bank 8). People often perceived the church as a religious voluntary association.

Satsang is a term used for sacred gathering and fellowship in Indian context. Christward movement in Delhi has been using this term to a great extent and they may continue to use it. Because of the popularity of the term in the context and acceptance in the society with its non–Christian identity, *satsang* model of ecclesiology is conducive for Christward movement. However, the intimacy and fellowship in the house church model and mission focus of missionary congregation need to be incorporated into it so that Christward movement would accelerate in Delhi. A combination of these models would produce an *ecclesiastical* model appropriate for Christward movement.

A Renewed Identity: Hindu (Sikh) Believer in Christ

Believers in Christward movement continued their old social (including religious) identity along with their faith in Christ. People continued their identity as Hindu or Sikhs and some even involved in old religious activities apart from worshiping idols. In my observation there was seldom any believer in Christward movement who did not continue their old identity. The leaders also did not perceive the necessity for discontinuing their old identity immediately. According to them, faith in Christ was a spiritual matter more than a social matter. I observed several reasons behind it such as maintaining good relationship with friends and relatives, opposition to Christianity and theological indifferences like influence of "grace theology."

The Literature Review in Chapter 2 shows that conversion is a multifaceted process (social, work place, family) of religious change. Krailsheimer states that conversion follows difficult family circumstances and isolation among friends (30). In the study it is observed that in order to cope up with the challenges in the social aspect of conversion, people continued their social identity. In Chapter 2, conversion is perceived

as new birth which is a spiritual matter. The primary focus is establishing relationship with God. The Literature Review also discussed about contextualizing conversion, especially Wilfred's proposal to prefer becoming Christian (centrifugal way of conversion) rather than being Christian (centripetal way of conversion) and the c– spectrum approach by John Travis. An integrated view on Wilfred's and Travis's approaches along with a perception of conversion as relationship with God leads to a conclusion that believers can continue in their old social identity.

The biblical account of the conversion of Nineveh shows that they turned to YHWH but they neither joined Jewish community nor did they become converts to Judaism (Jonah Ch.4). The story of Samaritans believing in Jesus also does not point to any social conversion as they put their faith in Christ (John Ch.4). The book of Acts also shows that the Gentile converts were not asked to follow Jewish Christianity, but rather were given freedom to follow Christ in their cultural way (Acts ch.15). Thus, in the Bible, faith in Christ is not necessarily accompanied with social conversion.

There are several Indian Christian theologians who followed Christ outside Christianity. Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya was a pioneer thinker in this line. He said Christians in Indian should be allowed to continue the cultural and religious heritage of India along with their faith in Christ. He emphasized on integration of social structure of India into Christian way of life (Sumitra 68). He has been called a Hindu Catholic. Chenchiah was another Indian Christian theologian who proposed possibility of Christian community outside the church. He had very negative attitude to organized church. Boyd says Chenchiah concluded that it was essential to find a new and vital form of Christian community and turned to the ancient idea of the *ashram* (160). Another Indian

theologian, Manilal C. Parekh, called himself a Hindu Christian (Boyd 267). These theologians had prepared the ground to present Christian faith in a contextual way.

Thus, we see that this research points to the progressive understanding of conversion which allows people to continue in their old social identity with faith in Christ. The Hindu (Sikh) believers have a renewed identity as Hindu (Sikh) as well as believers in Christ.

Role of Sociological Factors in Christward Movement

In my observation, sociological factors in urban India are a major reason for the growth of Christward movement in Delhi. Unfortunately, only a small segment of believers recognized the role of sociological factors while all leaders perceived it as vital. Awareness about its importance is needed among believers. Ninety percent of the members of Christward movements are migrants. I have observed that most of those migrants are either middle age nuclear families or youngsters. As migrants, they are open for change in every aspect of their life. Moreover, they are free from the control of joint family. When the gospel is presented to these young migrants and nuclear families, they are more open to Christ in Delhi. I have observed that the challenges and pressure of urbanization in the city life has left them in emotional and physical needs that they are longing for genuine fellowship and guidance in their life. Thus, sociological factors played a major role in the conversion of people to Christ in Delhi.

Chapter 2 discussed various sociological factors contributing to the conversion of people in North Indian cities such as urbanization, migration, changing family structure in cities and aspiration for emancipation from caste system. These factors contribute significantly for the growth of Christward movement in Delhi. According Greenway and

Monsma, urbanization is a process of change in life and opens people for changes which create more openness to gospel too (13). In Delhi, these sociological factors have accelerated Christward movement. Manokaran says,

> Migrants are open minded people with spirit of adventure. They tend to be receptive to new ideas … abandonment of social ties make them to feel total isolated. This isolation or loneliness is a great time in a person's life. It makes him to think and reflect several key issues of life. Such persons carefully consider gospel presentation. (179)

The Literature Review also reveals that in the history, sociological factors were also vital features behind mass movements and people movements in India. In the Bible we see that the Jesus movement among Samaritans had sociological aspects in it. Sociological factors were vital aspects in the growth of the New Testament Church too. In the book of Acts we see that household family structure was employed in the conversion of people. The public preaching in the New Testament (Acts 2:14–41; 3:12; 4:4; 5:42; 8:6–13; 14:14) was adopted from the social world. Rolland Allen refers to Paul's preaching in the marketplace in Athens (Acts 17:17) as preaching in *agora* which was a common practice in the New Testament world (62). It was patterned after a common phenomenon in the Greco–Roman cities. Manokaran says, "New Testament congregation at imperial Rome emerged as result of migration growth (180)." Thus, we see that social realities were employed in the conversion activities in the Bible.

Sociological factors are vital in Christward movement. Conversion includes several social aspects. Therefore we should take benefit of the social realities in Delhi which are supportive to accelerate Christward movement.

Ministry Implication of the Findings

This study contributes to the missions and church planting work among urban dwellers in North India. A few ministries are focusing on urban missions today in India. Some of the old mission works have begun to consider cities as major areas of mission. In such a context, this study provides them insights about Christward movement in Delhi. The study indicates several sensitive areas which need careful attention. The study also gives guidelines for effective ministry in Delhi.

There are only a few written materials on Christward movement in cities in North India today. There are several cities in North India where Christward movement is taking place. The lack of resources often leaves people in ambiguity on various concerns of the movement. This research provides insights on several ministry aspects for those who are part of the Christward movement in Delhi. At same time, it also would contribute to a great extend to those who are involved with Christward movement in various cities of North India. Thus, it contributes to the existing literature on the topic and Christward movement all over North India.

Christward movement in Delhi is led mostly by individual independent leaders. Many of them do not have systematic approach to the movement. It was mostly incidental that they are leading a group today. Many of them also do not have any opportunity for equipping themselves to lead the movement effectively. In such a context, this study gives them guidelines on various steps to lead Christward movement effectively in Delhi. This study has a wide range of participants which enriches the findings of the study.

This research is also vital in the contemporary antagonistic situation in India. India missions have been going through a period of opposition for the last few years. Christian churches and ministers are persecuted in various places in North India. In such a context, this study helps to cope with these challenges in significant ways. The idea of a Hindu believer in Christ is a strategic step to overcome the opposition. Continuing with old identity helps them to overcome several possible oppositions. Using the term *satsang* for corporate worship is also very relevant in this period of time when church is viewed as enemy to the society. Such a contextual approach to conversion and church is vital for the ministry in North India.

Limitations of the Study

This study was not based on any particular theory either on conversion or on a church model. This study was an explanatory mixed method approach, and used an inductive interpretation of scripture. The study primarily dealt with the movement to Christ in Delhi. The context was predominantly applicable to the North Indian context. Therefore, this study did not provide a basis for a generalization of all movements to Christ around the world.

This study exclusively dealt with the Christward movement in North Indian cities, and specifically in Delhi. There are several movements to Christ happening in rural India. Movements to Christ among *dalits* and tribals are happening in different locations in North and South India, but this study cannot be fully generalized for movements in the rural areas.

The data for answering the research question was gathered through the research instruments developed for this study. Focus group interview, individual interview, and

questionnaires were the methods employed to collect data. There are several groups of the Christward movement in Delhi. Only ten groups were chosen to participate in the study. Therefore, the information was gathered in a representative approach, which left the opportunity for information beyond what was mentioned in this research. However, the answers to the research questions in this research were common with any similar research carried out in any city of North India. The data carried considerable significance from the representative approach in this research.

Unexpected Observations

Christian mission in Delhi has gone through a significant amount of transformation in order to adapt itself to the receptivity of the gospel. No one can underestimate the paradigm shift in contextualizing the mission in Delhi. The openness to the gospel in spite of the increasing opposition is encouraging. A great move of the Holy Spirit through miracles as well as signs and wonders are inspiring reality.

I was surprised to know that common people in Delhi look forward to Christ for the answers in their life. It shows that the harvest is ready and receptivity to the gospel is very high in Delhi. In the past, people were very rigid in their traditional faith, but now there is much openness to Christ. However, Christian mission in general is not aware of this change, and so is not prepared to take advantage of this reality in the field.

My second surprise was that there is a Worshiping group in every street of Delhi. In other words, there is an *ecclesia* almost in every parts of Delhi. These groups remain in their own circle and often struggle in several areas without any network with others. There are so many traditional mission organizations and churches in Delhi. They have not considered bringing these groups together in unity so that they can be edified and

mutually benefitted. The lack of strong networking among these groups was evident in the data collection.

The third unexpected observation was the shift from house churches to hall pattern. Generally in mission studies, the house church model had become more acceptable in the Indian context. However, people are not content with the house church model in Delhi. Though they begin worshiping as a group in a house, they soon opted to move to a hall, which can be used for corporate worship. Leaders who run the worship in houses find it difficult to keep people with them. So, they are somehow forced to move to a hall for worship. This was very surprising that even though people looked for intimacy and fellowship in the city, they did not want a house fellowship. They looked for a charismatic leader with a *satsang* model of worship.

The fourth surprise was that many of the leaders of the Christward movement begin as a layperson. Many of them began ministry along with his or her job, though some came into full–time ministry afterwards. Some of them never had an opportunity to get any training for ministry. I was surprised that two of them asked me personally about the possibility of some online degrees for them. Despite the fact that they did not have any training they gave outstanding leadership to the movement. However, there were no efforts to provide training for these leaders and to recognize them from any mission trainers. These leaders are often left unidentified, though there are several training programs conducted in Delhi for those who are in ministry.

Future Directions for the Study

Strategic collaboration with traditional mainline churches in Delhi would contribute significantly to the Christward movement. There are lot of facilities and

resources available with the mainline churches in Delhi. The Christward movement should take advantage of these available resources. However, certain guidelines have to be accepted by both the groups so that the Christward movement can continue to be a separate movement outside the traditional institutionalized church and at the same time be supported by the church.

The Christward movement needs a leadership platform where networking and consultation can be done among the leaders of the movement in Delhi. There is urgency for the formation of such a platform where creative strategies and partnerships can be developed to advance the movement in Delhi. Such a forum can nourish the leaders, expand the vision, enrich knowledge, and bring believers together. It can be a basis to establish solidarity and take the movement to a higher level from individual groups to a collective movement.

The Christward movement needs to work on the pragmatic side of its strategic approach to the concept, "Hindu believers in Christ." It should ponder this concept as either adopted as a (temporary) missional strategy, or a theological position to be continued. In both cases, the process has to be worked out very sensitively to avoid chaos in the movement. In the history of Indian Christian theology, concepts like *Christu bhakts* and the Ashram movement were not effectively applied in a wider context. The study revealed that in Delhi, they expect the paradigm shift from Hindu believers in Christ to Christian believers in the next generation of believers. Therefore, Hindu believers in Christ are themselves a missional strategy with a holistic transformation in future. Moreover, there is only a thin line between a Hindu believer in Christ and syncretism. This has to be clarified to avoid danger of syncretism in future.

Contextually relevant theological and leadership training is vital in order to enhance the growth of the Christward movement in Delhi. In the interview, the need for a proper leadership was repeatedly stated. Leaders need sound theology to teach the Word and to balance between contextualization and syncretism. The leaders also need to expand the horizon of knowledge in leadership studies. The Christward movement needs leaders with sound theology, biblical preaching, and leadership skills. There should be a leadership training program for the Christward movement.

The Christward movement among the urban dwellers in North India is in its initial stage today. Not much research has been done on it. Systematic research on various aspects of the movement will enhance the existing knowledge. This study was focused on Delhi, but there are other cities in North India where such movements are taking place. Specific research can be done on each of the major cities. Future areas of research can be leadership development for the Christward movement, discipleship of new believers, partnership with mainline churches, and sustainability of the Christward movement.

Review of the Chapter

This chapter provided a learning report of the research "Christward movement among urban dwellers in North India: A study on Delhi." In this chapter, findings of the research are discussed, along with its basis in the Literature Review and Biblical Foundation. The major findings were spiritual leadership in the Christward movement; the place of miracles in Christward movement; *masihi satsang*, a method for corporate worship; renewed identity of believers as Hindu believers in Christ; and role of sociological factors in the growth of Christward movement. This chapter also included a description of ministry implications, limitation of the study, unexpected observation, and

future directions of the study. The chapter ends with a reflection on my journey in doing this research.

Postscript

This research was an incredible journey that I never envisioned in detail when I initially thought of studying the Christward movement in Delhi. Writing on the Christward movement was insightful and at the same time challenging. The findings helped me to really immerse myself into the Christward movement and joyfully celebrate the move of the Holy Spirit among the non–Christians in Delhi. A passion and burden for people has led leaders of the movement to go to the extreme of the praxis in order to incorporate people into the love of Christ. The missional significance of the movement prompted me for this journey.

In this research I went through the transforming influence of the gospel among the urban dwellers in North India. My journey with the Christward movement in Delhi was a fascinating experience. I was excited to know how the non–Christians were coming to Christ. It was an encouraging phenomenon that every *gali* (street) in Delhi has a congregation. It was even more inspiring to know that people expect believers to have solutions to their problems.

As I reviewed the literature for this research, the biblical stories of conversion were very illuminative. It revealed the hand of God in bringing people to Christ irrespective of their background. The theological discussions on contextualization of conversion and church models appropriate for the Indian context were very thought–provoking. I have been involved in church planting and missions for several years in

North India, but this research provided a structure to organize and implement my own thoughts on the Christward movement in Delhi.

As I reflected on this study, the discussion on trends in conversion and models of church was very insightful. In the mission field, conversion took place in different level. This study considered various reasons for the conversion of people to Christ.

There are different models of church in North India today. The models of church discussed in the research shed light on comprehending the differences in the pattern among churches in North India. This research has answered many questions in the mission field I am involved in. This research has specifically brought out several issues in the ministry in a systematic way. As a minister in the field, it has helped me to understand the need of the hour, and to develop a framework for my ministry accordingly. I am sure that with the insights that I received from this study, I will be able to take our church planting ministry to new heights. I am inspired to focus on cities in North India. I will incorporate the findings of the study in our missions.

Urban dwellers in North India are open to the gospel today. I am convinced that this is the time to give our best for missions in North India. It is true that there is a growing opposition. I myself had gone through severe opposition while writing this research. On the other hand, this is period of receptivity for the gospel. This study has convinced me about my responsibility in the field, which is ripe for harvest. With the help of the findings in this study, I will be able to multiply and accelerate the Christward movement in various cities in North India.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Guide for Leaders of Christward Movement in Delhi

1. Please provide some demographic details such as name, age, education, ministry experience in Delhi, family background, and anything you want to let me know about yourself.

2. Can you please explain about the Christward (conversion) movement in Delhi in the recent past?

3. As a leader/minister of the Christward movement, please explain your experience in ministry.

4. I noticed that many people come to Christ due to healing. Do you agree with that? What are other reasons, both divine and social, behind the conversion of people to Christ in Delhi?

5. Migrants are generally open to change. How much did the migration contribute to conversion to Christ in Delhi

6. What segments of people (age groups, living standard, educational background, nuclear family) are coming to Christ generally in Delhi?

7. As a leader of the Christward movement, what are the needs of the Christward movement in order to excel? Please specify immediate and long–term needs.

8. As a leader of the Christward movement, what are your spiritual and physical needs?

9. How do you sense the impact of Hindutva upon the Christward movement in Delhi?

10. Suppose you are asked to develop a model of *ecclesia* for the Christward movement. In your opinion, please explain an ideal Worshiping community for the Christward movement. What are the things that you will do, and what are the things you will avoid? What will help *ecclesia* to grow?

11. Explain the characteristics of the Christward movement.

Interview Guide for Focus Groups

This interview was done primarily to collect data about the characteristics of the

Christward movement in Delhi.

1. Describe your understanding about the Christward (conversion) movement in

    Delhi in the recent past? Give a general overview.

2. Explain your view on evangelism in Delhi—specifically your view about the

    methods of evangelism, how the social web is employed in evangelism, lay

    people in evangelism, etc.

3. What is the general spiritual standard of the converts in Delhi—such as they are

    believers in Christ but not baptized; believers in Christ and baptized, but not

    formally members of any *ecclesia* ; baptized believers in Christ and formal

    members of *ecclesia* ? Explain your view.

4. What is the social identity of converts in Delhi—such as they continue with their

    old identity along with faith in Christ; discontinue their old without publically

    declaring their new faith; leave their old identity and take a Christian identity?

    Explain.

5. What is the response of believers to their old religion? Why?

6. How much the gospel transformed the life of the people who accepted Christ?

7. Describe the leadership in the Christward movement.

8. In your opinion, how will you narrate the corporate worship of the Christward

    movement (like a *stasang*, Charismatic church, fellowship and house church,

    traditional church, etc.)

9. How do you perceive the relation between the Christward movement and traditional Christianity in Delhi?

10. What are the factors behind the conversion to Christ in Delhi?

11. Suggest some ways to grow the conversion movement in Delhi.

Open–Ended Questionnaire for Believers of Christward Movement in Delhi

1. Please fill your demographic details:

Name: Age: Education:

Occupation: Believer in Christ since:

2. Please explain your understanding about people coming to Christ.

3. What are the spiritual reasons for people coming to Christ in Delhi?

4. How important is power evangelism (signs and wonders, exorcism, spiritual

   warfare, etc.) in the conversion of people?

5. What is the role of migration in conversion of people to Christ?

6. I have noticed that nuclear families are open to Christ in Delhi. In your opinion,

   what are the reasons behind it?

7. Have you observed that people who come to Christ also go through a change in

   their living standard? What are the reasons?

8. How did you come to know Christ in your life?

9. In your opinion, what are the factors leading people to Christ in Delhi?

10. As a believer in Christ, what are your needs to lead others to Christ?

11. What do you need to grow as a believer in Christ individually and as a family?

12. Can you explain your struggles in your life as a believer?

13. What will make your fellowship group (*ecclesia*) attractive and feel at home for

    new believers?

14. What are the things to remove and to add in your church to bring more people to

    Christ?

15. What kind of legal support is needed for your *ecclesia*?

16. What are the important needs to grow as a community of believers in Delhi?

17. Explain in your words the conversion movement in Delhi.

APPENDIX B

Ethical Considerations Worksheet: Informed Consent Letter (Interview)

You are invited to be in a research study being done by **Jaison George**

Pazhampillil Vargheese from Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because

you are part of the Christward movement in Delhi in some capacity, either as a member,

leader, or associate.

The purpose of the research is to prepare a manual for the Christward movement

among the urban dwellers in North India based on the study of Delhi.

There are minimal risks for the participants as there are certain amounts of risk in

any study. The immediate risk would be that you are expected to give time to fill out a

survey. You also have to objectively answer the questions in the survey. As members of

the Christward movement, you may be afraid about your secret identity as followers of

Christ. Sometimes, you may not want to make it known to the public that you are

following Christ. In order to address this issue, I assure you that your details and

information will not mentioned anywhere in the research. They will not be shared with

anyone else outside the research. It will benefit the participants who are mostly members

of the Christward movement to excel in the work.

I will be using a digital voice recorder for recording the interview.

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to **give an interview and**

answers to some questions in order to explore and understand the Christward

movement, and to respond effectively to its needs.

Your family will know that you are in the study. If anyone else is given

information about you, they will not know your name. A number or initials will be used

instead of your name.

If something makes you feel bad while you are in the study, please tell **Jaison George Pazhampillil Vargheese**. If you decide at any time you do not want to finish the study, you may stop whenever you want. My contact details are: **Jaison Geogre, PTS Compund, 51–C Rajpur Road, Dehradun. My e–mail is jaisondoon@gmail.com. My phone numbers are: 09997952646; 08171941921.**

You can ask **Jaison George Pazhampillil Vargheese** questions any time about anything in this study. You can also ask your parent any questions you might have about this study.

Signing this paper means that you have read this or had it read to you, and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not sign the paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be mad if you do not sign this paper or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do.

_____   _____

Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study   Date Signed

Informed Consent Letter (Questionnaire)

You are invited to be in a research study being done by **Jaison George**

Pazhampillil Vargheese from Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because

you are part of the Christward movement in Delhi in some capacity, either as a member,

leader, or associate. This informed consent form is distributed to you by leaders of the

Christward movement in Delhi who have agreed to do so.

The purpose of the research is to prepare a manual for the Christward movement

among the urban dwellers in North India based on the study of Delhi.

There are minimal risks for the participants as there are certain amounts of risk in

any study. The immediate risk would be that you are expected to give time to fill out the

survey. You also have to objectively answer the questions in the survey. As members of

the Christward movement, you may be afraid about your secret identity as followers of

Christ. Sometimes, you may not want to make it known to the public that you are

following Christ. In order to address this issue, I assure you that your details and

information will not mentioned anywhere in the research. They will not be shared with

anyone else outside the research. It will benefit the participants who are mostly members

of the Christward movement to excel in the work.

If you agree to be in the study, you will be give questionnaire, which you have to

fill out. Your answers to these **questions will help to explore and understand the**

Christward movement, and to respond effectively to its needs.

Your family will know that you are in the study. If anyone else is given

information about you, they will not know your name. A number or initials will be used

instead of your name.

If something makes you feel bad while you are in the study, please tell **Jaison George Pazhampillil Vargheese**. If you decide at any time you do not want to finish the study, you may stop whenever you want. My contact details are: **Jaison Geogre, PTS Compund, 51–C Rajpur Road, Dehradun. My e–mail is jaisondoon@gmail.com. My phone numbers are 09997952646; 08171941921.**

You can ask **Jaison George Pazhampillil Vargheese** questions any time about anything in this study. You can also ask your parent any questions you might have about this study.

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_____   _____

Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study   Date Signed

APPENDIX C

MAP OF DELHI

APPENDIX D

MAP OF INDIA

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