

**CHRISTIAN IDENTITY, HINDU NATIONALISM
AND RELIGIOUS COMMUNAL VIOLENCE IN
INDIA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
KANDHAMAL, ODISHA (1985–2010)**

By

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As candidate supervisor, I hereby approve this thesis for submission



Professor Philippe Denis 5th March 2019

ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to understand why Indian Christian identity became a problem in the secular Republic of India. Western Christianity arrived in India in the very beginning of the sixteenth century. The Hindu fundamentalists began to oppose Christianity vehemently from the beginning of the twentieth century, by establishing various Hindu organisations based on an ideology of *Hindutva*. After India's independence in 1947, religious communal violence was on rising, and it divided the people in the name of religion which had a great impact on Indian politics. The communal riots in Kandhamal had a long history. The riots during the years 2007 and 2008 claimed more than 100 lives and displaced 56,000 Christians. It was one of the results of the communal divide on religious grounds in the country. In order to ascertain the factors that caused violence and the depth of the issue, the study engages four theories.

There are two dominant ethnic groups living in Kandhamal. The tribal Konds are the aboriginals, and the Dalit Panas are those who migrated to the hills centuries ago and settled among the Konds. The Panas adopted the Konds' culture, language and customs. The problem began soon after the Europeans entered the Kandhamal hills. In the name of civilisation, the Europeans imposed their values on the inhabitants which forced them to shun their traditional and customary practices. The Konds had opposed the Europeans, while the Panas accepted them and embraced Christianity.

Meanwhile, the emergence of Hindu national political party with the ideology of *Hindutva* changed the political scenario of Indian politics from the 1990s. The Sangh Parivar's political strategy of using religious sentiments to polarise the majority Hindus led to violence in many parts of the country. Swami Lakshmanananda, a Hindu missionary, became influential with the help of the Sangh Parivar's political power. He worked for 40 years to convert the tribal Konds into Hindus and turned them against the Christian Panas by projecting all petty local issues as communal concerns. The Kandhamal violence was one of the well-planned attacks against Christians to gain a political mileage by the Sangh Parivar.

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DEDICATION

I respectfully dedicate this research work to the people of Kandhamal, and the victims of religious communal violence all over the world who are facing violence for their religious identity.

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------|--|
| ABVP | – Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad |
| ADFI | – Alliance Defending Freedom International |
| AEI | – Anjuman-E-Islam |
| AICC | – All India Christian Council |
| AISF | – All India Student Federation |
| BCE | – Before Common Era |
| BDO | – Block Development Officer |
| BJP | – Bharatiya Janata Party |
| BSP | – Bahujan Samaj Party |
| CE | – Common Era |
| CHAI | – Church History Association of India |
| CIPBC | – Anglican Church of India, Pakistan, Burma, and Ceylon |
| CLS | – The Christian Literature Society |
| CRPF | – The Central Reserve Police Force |
| CSI | – Church of South India |
| CSNR | – Centre for the Sustainable Use of Natural and Social Resources |
| ETV | – Enhanced Television |
| EU | – European Union |
| FIR | – First Information Reports |
| HJM | – The Hindu Jagran Manch |
| ICP | – Indian Penal Code |
| IMS | – Indian Missionary Society |
| INC | – Indian National Congress |
| KFPJ | – Kuidina Forum for Peace and Justice |
| KM | – Kilo Meter |
| LTTE | – Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam |
| MCSA | – Methodist Church in Southern Asia |

| | |
|--------|--|
| MLA | – Member of Legislative Assembly |
| MP | – Member of Parliament |
| NAWO | – National Alliance of Women’s Organisations |
| NC | – Negotiation Committee |
| NDA | – National Democratic Alliance |
| NGO | – Non-Governmental Organisations |
| PAC | – Provincial Armed Constabulary |
| PUCL | – The People’s Union for Civil Liberties |
| RSS | – Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh |
| RTC | – Round Table Conference |
| SC | – Scheduled Caste |
| SIUC | – South Indian United Churches |
| ST | – Scheduled Tribe |
| UCNI | – United Church of North India |
| UN | – United Nations |
| UP | – Uttar Pradesh |
| USA | – United States of America |
| USCIRF | – US Commission on International Religious Freedom |
| VHP | – Viswa Hindu Parishad |
| VKA | – Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram |
| WCC | – World Council of Churches |
| YMCA | – Young Men’s Christian Association |

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This study analysed the religious communal violence in India, particularly in Kandhamal.¹ It also examined how the Christians in India responded to the violence and the steps they have taken to establish their Indian Christian identity in the context of raising Hindu nationalism in order to make the majority Hindus accept Christianity as it is. India is a pluralistic country where more than 3000 caste² and tribal communities live, all with different beliefs, languages, cultures, traditions and customs. In the recent past, communal violence in the name of religion has become a daily happening in the secular republic. Since India's independence in 1947, there has been an unprecedented growth and impact of Hindu nationalism³ in the socio-political sphere in India. The term '*Hindutva*' coined by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in 1923 for Hindu nationalism in India betrays an ideology that promotes one nation with one religion, one culture and one language. According to *Hindutva*, the Christians and Muslims in India are not true Indians because they are not following the religion and culture of India. The demand of *Hindutva* is that Muslims and Christians must convert to Hinduism or leave the country. In order to achieve this ideological goal, Hindu fundamentalists target Muslims and Christians in various ways and question their national identity. As a result, frequent

¹ Kandhamal District is located in central Odisha. Nearly 66% of the acreage of the district is covered with dense forestlands and lofty mountains rich in greenery hayfields at the altitude of 2000–3000 feet; the terraced valleys thronged with these colourful tribals in their natural heritage, and their dancing and sporting have their own attractions. As per the 2001 census, its population was 648,201. The total tribal population was 336,809, lower-caste population was 109,506 and the rest are other communities. Most inhabitants belonging to the Kond tribes are not religious, but ethnic groups. They have espoused faiths other than Hinduism. They hold 77% of the cultivable land. About 17% of the populations are the *Panas* who are designated as lower castes. They hold 9% of the cultivable land. The majority of the *Panas* (90%) are Christians. Odisha is one of the poorest states in India. Kandhamal is one of the poorest districts in Odisha. Totally 78% of the *Adivasis* (people who live in the forest) live below the poverty line. They mainly speak in Oriya and Kui. Saumya Uma, *Kandhamal: The Law Must Change Its Course* (Delhi: Multi Action Research Group, 2010), 1. Cf. Barbara M. Boal, *The Church in the Kond Hills* (Nagpur: NCCI, 1963), 227.

² The term 'caste' is not an Indian word. It is derived from the Portuguese '*casta*' meanings pure race, lineage or breed. *Varna* and *jati* are the Indian words used for it. Caste is a system in Indian society which determines the social status of a person. M. N. Srinivas, *Caste in Modern India: and Other Essays* (Bombay: Asia publishing house, 1977), 43.

³ The ideology of Hindu nationalism was promoted by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883–1966), the founder of Hindu *Mahasabha* (1915). He used the term *Hindutva* for Hindu nationalism. The ideology of *Hindutva* is to establish united India in terms of one nation, one culture, one religion and one language. Jyotirmaya Sharma, *Hindutva: Exploring the Idea of Hindu Nationalism* (Noida: Harper Collins Publishers in India, 2015), 199. D. D. Pattanaik, *Hindu Nationalism in India: Modern Trends* (New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publications, 1998), 128.

religious communal riots and violence have taken place in various places in India, particularly in Kandhamal.⁴

It was in Kandhamal in December 2007, over 100 churches and Christian institutions came under the attack of Hindu nationalists groups. As a result of this attack, more than 400 Christian houses were destroyed. In August 2008, a large-scale riot broke out there and lasted for more than two months. This happened when a Hindu nationalist leader was shot dead by an unidentified assailant. The Hindu nationalistic groups accused the Christians of that incident. More than a hundred Christians were killed, 6000 Christian houses were destroyed, 56,000 Christians were driven out from their villages, 300 churches and Christian institutions were demolished.⁵ The religious minorities were persecuted in different ways every day. Against this background, this study investigated the issue of Christian identity in the light of the religious communal violence in Kandhamal.

The researcher was a minister of the Church of South India⁶ and is currently a lecturer in the Department of History of Christianity and Mission at Bishop's College,⁷ Kolkata. Though he does not belong to Kandhamal, as an Indian Christian he feels the threat of Hindu nationalism to the Christians whole of India. He is aware of and can see a constant struggle of the Indian Christian leaders and scholars struggling to indigenise Christianity in order that the Christians in India may be treated socially equal to their fellow Hindu citizens. This academic critical study, based on a sound methodology, will help the Christians of India in dealing with the question of their national and personal identity against the background of the issue of religious communal violence against their religion.

⁴ M. T. Cherian, *Hindutva Agenda and Minority Rights: A Christian Response* (Bangalore: Centre for Contemporary Christianity, 2007), 190.

⁵ Anto Akkara, *Kandhamal a Blot on Indian Secularism* (Delhi: Media house, 2009), 23.

⁶ "Five different Church traditions, namely Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, Congregationalist and Reformed, merged together and formed the Church of South India (CSI) in 1947." Rajaiah D. Paul, *Ecumenism in Action* (Madras: CLS, 1972), 4.

⁷ Bishop's college was founded by the first Anglican Bishop of Calcutta, Bishop Thomas Middleton on 15 December 1820 in Kolkata, India. Initially, it was established as an Arts and Science College, and for the training of Indian Christians for the priesthood. Since 1918, it became a purely Theological College, serving the whole province of India, Myanmar and Sri Lanka. In 1970, it has become a collage of Church of North India (United Church). The students and faculty members represent different denominations. It offers Bachelor of Divinity (BD), Master of Theology (M. Th.) and Doctor of Theology (D. Th.). Ernest W. Talibuddin, *Bishop's College: Transition and Continuity* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2010), 2. <http://www.bishopscollege.ac.in/history> cited on 01/03/2016.

There are about 2415 villages in Kandhamal District. Socially, they are divided into two groups: castes and tribes; however, politically they are dominated by small strata of high-caste⁸ wealthy Hindus. The majority of the populations are from the lower castes and tribes, all of whom live in poverty. About 20 villages had been very badly affected by religious violence. The researcher visited nine villages in a period of two weeks. Since the study is focused on Christian identity, the researcher depended on the priest of the local Church to meet the people.

This study is in the purview of the Department of History of Christianity and focused on the period between 1985 and 2010. It analysed the colonial history of Kandhamal in order to find out the events that might have stimulated the natives to promote Hindu nationalism. The research tried to understand if and how the Christian mission historically played a major role in creating a new identity for the local converts and the role, if any, it played in the religious divide leading to the violence.

1.2 Review of literature

The Church History Association of India has published a series of six volumes of *History of Christianity in India* written by different historians, which are considered to be the main sources for Christian history in India.⁹ Though the series tries to cover the history of entire India, some areas have been given little attention, while others are not mentioned at all. The history of Christians in Odisha is, likewise, not adequately dealt with these volumes. The series is a colonial mission history written from the perspective of missions and not in the context of religious violence.

Historians like C. B. Firth and Stephen Neil have written the mission history but from a colonial perspective. John C. B. Webster, Samuel Jeyakumar, and Rowena

⁸ “The Indian society is classified by caste hierarchy. Though there are thousands of different caste and tribal groups, they are mainly divided into four categories as follows: forward caste, backward caste, scheduled caste and scheduled tribe. More than 90% of the Kandhamal District’s people belong to schedule caste and schedule tribe, but political representation is always decided by the forward caste Hindu leaders from Patnaiks or Khandayats.” Basker Roy, ‘Khandayats moving into political gear in Orissa’. *Times of India* (Online), 26 Mar. 2004. Available from: <http://www.indiatimes.com/india/khandayats>. Accessed on 20/02/2016.

⁹ A.M. Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India: From the Beginning up to the Middle of Sixteenth Century*, Vol. I (Bangalore: CHAI, 1984). J. Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India: From the Middle of Sixteenth Century to the End of Seventeenth Century*, Vol. II (Bangalore: CHAI, 1982). E.R. Humbye, *History of Christianity in India: During the Eighteenth Century*, Vol. III (Bangalore: CHAI, 1997). Hugald Grafe, *History of Christianity in India: Tamil Nadu in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Vol. IV (Bangalore: CHAI, 1990). F.S. Downs, *History of Christianity in India: North East India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Vol. V (Bangalore: CHAI, 1984). John C.B. Webster, *History of Christianity in India: North West India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Vol. VI (Bangalore: CHAI, 2012).

Robinson and Joseph Marianus recorded the history of *Dalits* and subaltern communities from a postcolonial perspective.¹⁰ They have not focused on Odisha's Christian history or Christian identity and religious violence in their writings. Nevertheless, these writings are helpful to understand the histories of different Indian Christian communities from different perspectives.

Barbara M. Boal, Trevor and Rona Locke, Deepak K. Behera, Dasarathi Swaro, Felix Padel, and Raghu Nath Rath have written the history of Kandhamal people, but they mainly focused on missionary activities, Church growth and institutional development of Christianity; they also included the local people's socio-economic and religious-cultural backgrounds.¹¹ These authors recorded some dissent between the local religious leaders and the British regarding rituals like human sacrifice. There is no record of religious communal violence. However, these sources will be helpful to understand the people of Kandhamal and how the abuses of colonial power stimulated the local people to join the Hindu nationalism movement.

Missiologists like Lesslie Newbigin, S. Jacob Dharmaraj, F. Hrangkhuma, Wesley Ariarajah, Samuel Jeyakumar, and J. David Bosch have written their books in the perspective of missions,¹² in which their focus is on how to do effective Christian missions in a particular context. Bosch has very briefly written on the topic of 'mission in the context of violence' in his book. However, he has not dealt with the issue of religious communal violence. These scholars struggled to decolonise and indigenise the gospel so that Christianity could be accepted by many Indians.

¹⁰ C.B. Firth, *An Introduction to Indian Church History* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1976). Stephen Neill, *A History of Christianity in India the Beginning to AD 1707* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1984). John C.M. Webster, *A History of the Dalit Christians in India* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press Ltd., 1992). Samuel Jeyakumar, *Dalit Consciousness and Christian Conversion* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1999). Stephen Neill, *A History of Christianity in India (1707 to 1858)* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Rowena Robinson and Joseph Marianus Kujur, *Margins of Faith: Dalit and Tribal Christianity in India* (New Delhi: SAGE, 2010).

¹¹ Barbara M. Boal, *The Church in the Kond Hills: An Encounter with Animism* (Nagpur: NCCI, 1963). Trevor and Rona Locke, *Tribals for Christ* (Bangalore: Indian Evangelical Mission, 1978). Deepak K. Behera, *Ethnicity and Christianity: Christians Divided by Caste and Tribe in Western Orissa* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 1989). Dasarathi Swaro, *The Christian Missionaries in Orissa* (Kolkata: Punthi Pustak, 1990). Raghu Nath Rath, *The Kandhas and Kandhamal: Studies in History and Culture* (Bhubaneswar: Amadeus Press, 2010).

¹² Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society* (Sewanee: SPCK/USA, 1989). Jacob S. Dharmaraj, *Colonialism and Christian Mission: Post-Colonial Reflections* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1993). F. Hrangkhuma, ed., *Christianity in India: Search for Liberation and Identity* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1998). S. Wesley Ariarajah, *Not without My Neighbour: Issues in Interfaith Relations* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1999). Samuel Jeyakumar, *Mission Reader: Historical Models for Holistic Mission in the Indian Context* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2002). J. David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shift in Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbis books, 2011).

Consequent to the September 11, 2001 attack on the USA, scholars like Mark Juergensmeyer, Gabriel A. Almond, Emmanuel Sivan and R. Scott, and Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby analysed the various socio-religious structures, cultural contexts, and political movements from which fundamentalist movements have emerged around the world.¹³ However, none dealt with Christian identity in the context of religious communal violence. These writings are postcolonial in perspective and demonstrating how colonial elements became a basic reason for the rise of fundamentalist movements. It may help to study these writings to gain an idea of the origin of Hindu nationalism in India.

When identity became a key issue all over the world in the new millennium, Sudhir Kakar, Sue A. Russell, Amin Maalouf, Biswamoy Pati, Pamela Ebstyn King, C. Kinnvall, Mark Juergensmeyer, Amartya Sen, Beckerlegge and Gwilym, Shagan and Ethan H. Jeditorial, Hastings and Derek, Scandwell Isabella, Joseph Hodes, Mangion, and Chandi Prasad Nanda and Hermann Kulke all studied the role of religious identity in the context of religious communalism in different countries and different periods.¹⁴ These writings will be helpful to the researcher to learn how other cultural communities dealt with the similar issues. It will give an academic orientation to the present study, though the present study is focused on the Indian context and will deal with how the

¹³ Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley: University of California, 2001). Gabriel A. Almond, Emmanuel Sivan and R. Scott, *Strong Religion: The Rise of Fundamentalism around the World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003). Mark Juergensmeyer, *Why Do Religious People Commit Violent Act in the Name of God* (Berkeley: University of California, 2006).

¹⁴ Sudhir Kakar, *The Colours of Violence: Cultural Identities, Religion and Conflict* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). Sue A. Russell, *Conversion, Identity and Power: The Impact of Christianity on Power Relationships and Social Exchanges* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1999). Amin Maalouf, Trans by Barbara Bray, *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong* (New York: Penguin, 2003). Biswamoy Pati, *Identity, Hegemony, and Resistance: Conversions in Orissa, 1800–2000* (Gurgaon: Three Essays, 2003). Pamela Ebstyn King, “Religion and identity: The role of ideological, social and spiritual contexts,” *Applied Developmental Science*, 2004, 7, 196–203. C. Kinnvall, “Globalization and religious nationalism: self-identity and search for ontological security,” *International Society of Political Psychology*, 2004, 24 (5), 741–767. Mark Juergensmeyer, *Identity Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (New York: Penguin, 2006). Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence: Illusion of Destiny* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2007). Beckerlegge and Gwilym, *Colonialism, Modernity, and Religious Identity: Religious Reform Movements in South Asia* (London: Oxford University Press, 2008). Shagan and Ethan H. Jeditorial, *Catholics and Protestant Nation: Religious Politics and Identity in Early Modern England* (London, Manchester University Press, 2009). Hastings and Derek, *Catholicism and the roots of Nazism: Religious Identity and National Socialism* (London: Oxford University Press, 2011). Scandwell Isabella, *Religious Identity in late Antiquity: Greeks Jews and Christians in Antioch* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2011). Joseph Hodes, *From India to Israel: Identity, Immigration and struggle for Religious Equality* (Montreal: Mc Gill-Queen’s University Press, 2014). Mangion, *Contested Identities: Catholic Women Religious in Nineteenth Century England and Wales* (London: Manchester University Press, 2014). Chandi Prasad Nanda and Hermann Kulke, ed. *Rethinking local History and Identity Politics: Locating Kurmi Community in Odisha* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2015).

Christian identity became an issue in the context of religious communal violence in Kandhamal.

Rene Girard in his book *Violence and the Sacred*¹⁵ described how violence took place within the religious system in the name of rituals and divine punishment. This aspect of religious violence study helped the researcher to differentiate the religious violence from religious communal violence.

After 1985, rising religious violence vis-à-vis Hindu nationalism became a concern in India. Sumit Sarkar, Paul R. Bran, M. T. Cherian, Angana P. Chatterji, Lancy Lobo and Fanindam Deo all raised their concerns over the Indian constitutional rights of religious freedom and the nature of Indian national secularism.¹⁶ However, they did not deal with national identity in relation to religious communal violence. Therefore, these writings will help the researcher to understand the political motivation of the Hindu nationalistic groups. The Kandhamal riots in 2007 and 2008 brought a great challenge to the secular democratic nation of India. Shri Ram Pasari, Pralay Kanungo, Pramodini Pradhan, Raj Bharat Patta, Anto Akkara, Saumya Uma, Centre for Child Rights, National People's Tribunal, Elizabeth Joy and Hrangthan Chungi, Chrystal Dively, Premanand Nayak, and others started to investigate the incidents directly or indirectly with varying interests.¹⁷

¹⁵ Rene Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* Trans. By Patrick Gregory (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977).

¹⁶ Sumit Sarkar, *Beyond Nationalist Frames: Postmodernism, Hindu Fundamentalism History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002). Paul R. Bran, *Forms of Collective Violence: Riot, Pogroms and Genocide in Modern India* (Gurgaon: Three Essays, 2006). M.T. Cherian, *Hindutva, Agenda and minority Rights: A Christian Response* (Bangalore: Centre for Contemporary Christianity, 2007). Angana P. Chatterji, *Violent Gods: Hindu Nationalism in Indian's Present Narratives from Orissa* (Gurgaon: Three Essays, 2009). Lancy Lobo, "Religious fundamentalism – a challenge to democracy in India", *Social Action*, 2009, 59, 143–158. Fanindam Deo, *Socio-Religious Movements and Cultural Network in Indian Civilization* (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 2015).

¹⁷ Shri Ram Pasari, Comp. *Kandhamal, Odisha: Root cause* (Bhubaneswar: Justice on Trial, 2008). Pralay Kanungo, "Hindutva's fury against Christians in Orrisa," *Economic & Political Weekly*, Sep. 2008, 16- 19. Pramodini Pradhan, "Normalcy far from returning to Kandhamal," *Economic & Political Weekly*, Mar. 2008, 11–14. Raj Bharat Patta, *A Violent Sight on a Silent Night* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2009). Anto Akkara, *Shining Faith in Kandhamal* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2009). Anto Akkara, *Kandhamal a Blot on Indian Secularism* (Delhi: Media House, 2009). Saumya Uma, *Kandhamal: The Law Must Change Its Course* (Delhi: Multi Action Research Group, 2010). Centre for Child Rights, *Kandhamal's Forgotten Children: A Status Report* (New Delhi: National Solidarity Forum, 2010). The National People's Tribunal, "Jury's Preliminary Findings & Recommendations," Unpublished. Elizabeth Joy and Hrangthan Chungi, eds. *Dali Tribal Interface: A Ray of Hope for Healing and Restoration* (Delhi: ISPCK, CWM, NCCI, 2012). Anto Akkara, *Early Christians of 21st Century* (Bangalore: Veritas Indian Books, 2013). Anto Akkara, *Kandhamal Craves for Justice* (Bangalore: Veritas India Books, 2013). Chrystal Dively, "Cast and Cosmic war: Violence erupt in Kandhamal," *Chrestomathy: A Review of Undergraduate Research, School of Humanities and Social Science, College of Charleston*. 2012, Vol.

Some of these texts are a chronicle of incidents, and others are appeals for justice. Some analysed the event in secular, democratic and human rights perspectives to create awareness among the public and bring pressure to bear on the Government. But there is no proper historical study undertaken from the perspective of Christian identity vis-à-vis religious communal violence. The present study made use of all the relevant sources to analyse the religious violence from different perspectives in order to find out the Indian Christian identity in the context of rising Hindu nationalism.

1.3 Research Questions

The thesis examined in what ways the history of religious violence in Kandhamal informed Christian identity in the context of growing Hindu nationalism? Further, it examined the contexts in which Christianity came into Kandhamal, Odisha? What were the factors which contributed to the emergence of Hindu Nationalism in India, particularly in Kandhamal, Odisha? How conflict between Hindu nationalism and other religions influenced Christian self-understanding? The objectives of the study were to understand why Indian Christian identity is becoming an issue in Kandhamal in the context of religious communal violence; explore the attempts made by the Christian Church to assert their Indian national identity; explore the context in which Christianity came into Kandhamal, Odisha; examine how Hindu fundamentalism emerged in India particularly in Kandhamal, Odisha; assess the factors that influenced Christian self-understanding and why it became an issue for Hindu nationalists; and explore how the Christian Church could understand itself in India in the midst of religious communal violence.

1.4 Theoretical framework

This study engaged with postcolonial theory, Max Weber's Social Action Theory, Eagleton's Theory of Ideology and Hermans' Dialogical Self Theory to explain the problem being interrogated.

The origin of Christianity in Kandhamal (1852) and the rise of Hindu fundamentalism (1870s) in India dated from the time of British colonial rule.¹⁸ In 1852, the Christian missionaries started their work in this region by rescuing the children who

11, 81- 93. Premanand Nayak, *In Kandhamal...: There Is No Cheeks to Turn* (Delhi: Media House, 2015).

¹⁸ M.T. Cherman, *Hindutva, Agenda and Minority Rights: A Christian Response* (Bangalore: Centre for Contemporary Christianity, 2007). 156.

were meant for human sacrifice.¹⁹ In 1866, there was a severe famine in Odisha, during which missionaries helped the interior villages of the Kond hills. As a consequence, the people of Kandhamal began to accept Christianity.²⁰ Baptists and Roman Catholics established their Churches and other institutions to uplift the people with the help of the colonial power. By 1961, 113 Churches were established. These simultaneous developments created tension between Christians and Hindus because the colonial government was favouring only the Christians in many ways.²¹ This research used the postcolonial theory as a tool to analyse the colonial history in order to find out the factors leading to tension between Christians and Hindus in India particularly in the Kandhamal region. Postcolonial theory is an intellectual discourse that analyses, explains, and responds to the cultural legacies of colonialism and imperialism.²²

Christianity had played a major role in bringing social change in India, particularly in Kandhamal. According to Hrangkhuma et al., when people started to accept Christianity, they considered themselves liberated from social oppression.²³ The new religious moral values of Christianity changed their socio-economic and cultural statuses. According to Max Weber's Social Action Theory, human action is driven by meaning and motives. Action can only be understood by appreciating the worldview held by the social actors. He further states that religion is an important component of worldview; it directs human actions in a wide context. 'Action' includes all human behaviours when and in so far as the acting person adds an immanent meaning to it.²⁴ 'Action' is social where it takes other people into account. The person's worldview calculates the effect of having other people in it, in the form of expectations of how other people are going to behave.²⁵ The Hindu nationalists try to impose their meaning of nationalism onto the people of India. Many scholars believe that the Kandhamal religious communal violence was designed with two objectives in view: both an attempt

¹⁹ Barbara M. Boal, *The Church in the Kond Hills: An Encounter with Animism* (Nagpur: NCCI, 1963), 57.

²⁰ Dasarathi Swaro, *The Christian Missionaries in Orissa* (Kolkata: Punthi Pustak, 1990), 169.

²¹ Op. cit., Barbara M. Boal., 67.

²² Peter Childs and R.J. Patrick Williams, *An Introduction to Post-colonial Theory* (London: Prentice Hall, 1981), 4.

²³ F. Hrangkhuma, ed. *Christianity in India: Search for Liberation and Identity* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1998), 48.

²⁴ Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, Trans by A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons, (Illinois: The Falcon's Wing Press, 1947), 88.

²⁵ Randall Collins, *Max Weber: Masters of Social Theory*, Vol. 3 (England: SAGE Publication LTD, 1986), 44.

to establish a state of fear among the religious minorities and also to motivate Hindus to support Hindu nationalist agenda.

The 'Social Action Theory'²⁶ helped the researcher to analyse the worldview of Christians and Hindus in Kandhamal and how the worldviews of both religious groups influenced their actions against the other. This theory helped in understanding the behaviour and relationship of Christians and Hindus in Kandhamal. The theory also offered a relevant lens for critiquing how Christianity brought changes in the lives of the Christians in Kandhamal.

Indian nationalism is increasingly getting identified with the homogenising ideology of Hindu chauvinism.²⁷ In the Kandhamal riots, the ideology of 'Hindu nationalism' played a major role. Therefore, this study critically analysed Hindu nationalism through Terry Eagleton's proposed theory of ideology which draws from authors such as Seliger and Althusser. According to him,

An ideology is a system of signs, meanings, beliefs, values, and judgments related to conflicts in society. It reflects and expresses the interests and outlook of particular social groups or classes. It gives the members of such a group a sense of identity and an orientation for political action. It works not only with rational concepts but appeals also to the unconscious through symbols and myths.²⁸

This study also used the 'Dialogical Self Theory'²⁹ to deal with the identity problem of the Christians in Kandhamal. Hindu nationalists question the religious and cultural practices of Christians. The religious communal violence in Kandhamal targeted Christians due to their religious identity. Ethnicity, culture, religion and power relations

²⁶ Weber classified the Social action into four parts: 1) rational orientation to a system of discrete individual ends, 2) rational orientation to an absolute value, 3) affectual orientation and 4) traditional orientation. J.E.T. Eldridge, *Max Weber: The Interpretation of Social Reality* (London: Nelson's University, 1972), 78.

²⁷ "India is a land of Hindu culture; it belongs only to those who see her as Holy Land, land of our ancestors and land of our action. One's sacred sites must be located within the territorial boundaries of India. By that definition, Muslims and Christians were excluded from belonging since their sacred sites lay outside these confines." Kumkum Roy, Kunal Chakrabarti and Tanika Sarkar, *The Vedas, Hinduism, Hindutva* (Kolkata: Ebong Alap, 2005), 117.

²⁸ T. Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso, 1991), 1. Cf. Gabriele Dietrich and Bas Wielenga, *Towards Understanding Indian Society* (Tiruvalla: CSS, 1997), 72.

²⁹ According to Dialogical Self Theory, "Identity construction is a context bound activity. Identity is a product of social interaction. There are multiple positions from which society defines the individual including public features such as characteristics of a group or the institutions to which the person belongs." H. J. M. Herman and Hermans-Konopka, A. *Dialogical Self Theory: Positioning and Counter Positioning in a Globalizing Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge press, 2010), 127.

are the major factors in identity construction. Religion has been described as an identity-maker. Religious beliefs are grounded in culture and to a large extent deal with relationships. The present research problem relates to religious identity issues. It centred on the religious belief systems and how belief systems are reflected in voices/positions as the research participants are affected due to their religious identity. Since the study is focused on more than one issue and is an interdisciplinary study, the researcher used the above four theories accordingly in order to get better results.

1.4.1 Postcolonial theory

Postcolonial theory has been increasingly preoccupied in investigating the complicity of a larger part of Western culture, particularly the canon of the Western writings. It has significantly altered the mode of analysis through other relatively recent critical discourses as various as feminism and deconstruction. It has helped to undermine the traditional conception of disciplinary boundaries. It also insists ‘colonial discourse analysis’ upon the importance of studying literature together with history, politics, sociology and other arts. It breaks down the previously fixed boundaries between text and context to showcase the continuities between patterns of representation of subject people and the material practices of colonial power. It has also contributed to the interrogation of received distinctions between ‘high’ and ‘popular’ culture.³⁰

According to Anshuman Prasad, “Postcolonial theory is a set of productively syncretic theoretical and political positions that creatively employ concepts and epistemological perspectives deriving from a range of scholarly fields such as anthropology, history, cultural studies, political science, etc. as well as from multiple approaches to inquiry such as Marxism, feminism, deconstruction, and so on.”³¹

According to Peter Childs and R. J. Patrick Williams, postcolonial theory is an intellectual discourse that analyses, explains, and responds to the cultural legacies of colonialism and imperialism.³² The history of religious violence in Kandhamal, Odisha had a deep root of the colonial element. The postcolonial reading helps us to analyse,

³⁰ Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory: Context, Practices, Politics* (London: Verso, 1997), 8. Cf. Laura Chrisman and Benita Parry, eds. *Postcolonial Theory and Criticism* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000), 12.

³¹ Anshuman Prasad, ed. *Postcolonial Theory and Organizational Analysis: A Critical Engagement* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 7.

³² Peter Childs and R.J. Patrick Williams, *Introduction to Post-colonial Theory* (London: Prentice Hall, 1981), 4.

explain, and respond to the cultural impact of the colonial power of the British. The categorisation of peoples' identity such as tribal, Dalit and Oriyas was influenced by the colonial interpretation. Chapters 2 and 3 were inspired by the postcolonial theory.

1.4.2 Dialogical Self Theory

According to Dialogical Self Theory, "Identity construction is a context bound activity. Identity is a product of social interaction. There are multiple positions from which society defines the individual including public features such as characteristics of a group or the institutions to which the person belongs."³³ One of the basic tenets of Dialogical Self Theory is that people are constantly involved in a process of positioning and repositioning, not only in relation to other people but also in relation to themselves. These positions are involved in relationships of social dominance and power. When Christianity came into Kandhamal, the European missionaries brought the gospel with the dominance of economic, cultural and military power, and a group of the Panas and Konds decided to be with the dominant power for various reasons. They positioned themselves as Christians and adopted the Christian way of life by leaving their original custom and practices. Similarly, when the Sangh Parivar enter into Kandhamal, they became a social dominance and political power in Kandhamal by establishing educational and vocational institutes and its political wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) emerged as a larger political party and later became part of the ruling state government. The political and institutional powers dialogically influenced the *Vanavasis* (tribals) and gave them the new identity of 'Hindu'.

The dialogues are taking place in the society, with its traditions, established positions and social rules under any element of dominant and power. The micro-context of dialogical relationships cannot be understood without knowing some concept of macro-frames as organisational, institutional and ethnographic context.³⁴ *Hindutva* is a macro-frame for Hindu nationalists who work in the micro-context through their organisational and institutional bodies in a particular dialogical relationship. This theory was used to analyse the controversy over the identity of the Konds and Panas.

³³ Op. cit., H. J. M. Herman and Hermans-Konopka, 127.

³⁴ Hubert J.M. Hermans and Thorsten Gieser, eds. *Hand Book of Dialogical Self Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 9.

1.4.3 Theory of Ideology

The term ‘ideology’ is used in two fundamentally differing ways. Firstly, many authors employed this as a purely descriptive term: one speaks of ‘systems of thought’, of ‘system of belief’ and of ‘symbolic practices’ which pertain to social action or political projects. Ideology is present in every political programme, irrespective of whether the programme is directed towards the preservation or transformation of the social order. Secondly, for some authors, ideology is linked to the process of sustaining asymmetrical relations of power in order to maintain dominance.³⁵

For Louis Althusser, “Ideology is a necessary feature of any society, in so far as any society must provide the means to form its members and transform them to their conditions of existence. Human societies secrete ideology as the very element and atmosphere indispensable to their historical respiration and life.”³⁶ It is customary to view ideology as a form of consciousness or a realm of ideas. But for Althusser, ideology is not a distorted representation of real relations but rather a real relation itself, namely the relation through which human beings live in relation to their world.³⁷ “Ideology for Althusser is a particular organisation of signifying practices which goes to constitute human beings as social subjects, and which produces the lived relations by which such subjects are connected to the dominant relations of production in a society.”³⁸ Eagleton observes that Althusser’s ideology covers all the various political modalities of such relations, from the dominant power to an oppositional stance towards it. He adopts the broader sense of ideology; he is covertly constrained by an attention to the narrower sense of ideology as a dominant formation.³⁹

According to Martin Seliger,

An ideology is a belief system by virtue of being designed to serve on a relatively permanent basis a group of people to justify in reliance on moral norms and a modicum of factual evidence and self-consciously rational coherence the legitimacy of the implements and technical prescriptions which

³⁵ John B. Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984), 4.

³⁶ Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, Trans.by Ben Brewster (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1969), 232.

³⁷ Op. cit., John B. Thompson, 90.

³⁸ Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso, 1991), 18.

³⁹ Ibid.

are to ensure concerted action for the preservation, reform, destruction or reconstruction of a given order.⁴⁰

For Seliger, politics is inseparable from ideology since all political actions are directed towards one of these objectives. He developed an approach based on a distinction between two conceptions of ideology: firstly, the ‘restrictive conception’ which confines to specific political belief systems, and secondly, the ‘inclusive conception’ which applies to all political belief systems, irrespective of whether the beliefs guide action oriented towards preserving, destroying or rebuilding the social order.⁴¹ Eagleton argues that Seliger’s formation is more of ‘socialist ideology’, as it would not mean just ruling belief systems. Limiting the idea of power to its more obvious political manifestations would itself be an ideological move, disguising the complex diffuseness of its operations. If there are no values and beliefs not bound up with power, then the term ideology jeopardises to expand to the vanishing point.⁴²

According to John B. Thompson, “Ideology is partially constitutive of what, in our societies, ‘is real’. Ideology is not a pale image of the social world but is part of that world, a creative and constitutive element of our social lives.”⁴³ The term ideology is to make reference to belief systems and to question of power. The ideology has to do with legitimating the power of a dominant social group or class. The process of legitimating involves at least six different strategies. “A dominant power may legitimate itself by promoting beliefs and values acceptable to it, naturalizing and universalizing such beliefs so as to render them self-evident and apparently inevitable; denigrating ideas which might challenge it; excluding rival forms of thought, perhaps by some unspoken but systematic logic; and obscuring social reality in ways convenient to itself.”⁴⁴ Terry Eagleton argued that not every aspect of belief, which are commonly termed ‘ideological’, is associated with a dominant political power. If the term ‘ideology’ is confined to dominant forms of social thought, such a move would be inaccurate and confusing. There should be a kind of intersection between belief systems and political power which may be either challenged or confirmed a particular social order.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Martin Seliger, *Ideology and Politics* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1976), 120.

⁴¹ Op. cit., John P. Thomas, 76.

⁴² Op. cit., Terry Eagleton, 7.

⁴³ Op. cit., John B. Thompson, 5.

⁴⁴ Op. cit., Terry Eagleton, 5.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 6.

After analysing the above-mentioned scholars' view, Eagleton proposed six meanings of ideology as follows:

- 1) "Ideology is the general material process of ideas, beliefs, and values in social life. It is both political and epistemologically neutral, and is closed to the broader meaning of the term 'culture'. Ideology, or culture, would here denote the whole complex of signifying practices and symbolic processes in a particular society; it would allude to the way individuals 'lived' their social practices, rather than to those practices themselves, which would be the preserve of politics, economics, kinship theory and so on."⁴⁶
- 2) "Ideology is based on ideas and beliefs (whether true or false) which symbolize the conditions and life-experiences of a specific, socially significant group or class."⁴⁷
- 3) "Ideology is a kind of collective symbolic self-expression which attends to the promotion and legitimating of the interest of such social groups in the face of opposing interest."⁴⁸
- 4) "Ideology would emphasis on the promotion and legitimating of sectoral interests, but confine it to the activities of a dominant social power. This may involve the assumption that such dominant ideologies help to unify a social formation in ways convenient for its rulers; that it is not simply a matter of imposing ideas from above but of securing the complicity of subordinated classes and groups, and so on."⁴⁹
- 5) "Ideology signifies ideas and beliefs which help to legitimate the interests of a ruling group or class specifically by distortion and dissimulation."⁵⁰
- 6) "Ideology is an emphasis on false or deceptive beliefs but regards such beliefs as arising not from the interests of a dominant class but from the material structure of society as a whole."⁵¹

After careful analysis of the above-mentioned scholars' views on ideology, the researcher chose Eagleton's fourth meaning of ideology to analyse the *Hindutva* ideology. The *Hindutva* ideology of the Sangh Parivar emerges from the dominant caste

⁴⁶ Ibid., 28.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 29.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 30.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

group in India. It is emphasising the promotion and legitimating of sectoral interests, but is confined to the activities of a dominant social power that is Brahmanism. The Hindu fundamentalists are trying to polarise the different caste and tribal communities in India through the *Hindutva* ideology and to unify them to make a social formation of their convenience. When they are in power, they impose their ideas from above and also securing the complicity of subordinated classes and groups. This theory was helpful for analysing the *Hindutva* ideology.

1.4.4 Social Action Theory

According to Max Weber's 'Social Action Theory', human action is driven by meaning and motives. Action can only be understood by appreciating the worldview held by the social actors. He further states that religion is an important component of worldview; it directs human actions in a wide context. 'Action' includes all human behaviours when and in so far as the acting person adds an immanent meaning to it.⁵² 'Action' is social where it takes other people into account. The person's worldview calculates the effect of having other people in it, in the form of expectations of how other people are going to behave.⁵³ The Hindu nationalists try to impose their meaning of nationalism onto the people of India. Many scholars believe that the Kandhamal religious communal violence was designed with two objectives in view: both an attempt to establish a state of fear among the religious minorities and also to motivate Hindus to support the Hindu nationalist agenda.

Social action, which includes both failed to act and passive acquiescence may be oriented to the past, present, or expected future behaviour of others. Thus it may be motivated by revenge for a past attack, defence against the present, or measures of defence against future aggression.⁵⁴

The 'others' may be individual persons or a group of people. The Sangh Parivar is glorifying the past *Vedic* period, and through that, it tries to defend the Hindu culture by removing the 'others' and promises to bring back the *Vedic* period of glorious past. These four theories were used throughout the research accordingly in order to bring a better result.

⁵² Op. cit., Max Weber (1947), 88.

⁵³ Op. cit., Randall Collins, 44.

⁵⁴ J.E.T. Eldridge, *Max Weber: The Interpretation of Social Reality* (London: Nelson's University, 1972), 76.

1.5 Research methodology

This study is based on oral and written primary sources and on secondary literature. For the literature-based approach, it relied on books, journals, newspapers, and online resources, while for the empirical work, it used oral narratives. As an advocate of ‘Dialogical Self Theory’, the researcher found it a useful tool in the area of data collection during oral interviews because it provided a method of data collection by means of which the self is conceptualised as a narrative construction. An interview is a private meeting between people during which questions are asked and answered. In this way, the use of interview narratives fell within the framework opted, and it allowed participants to assume the position of storytellers, who are continually involved in the process of research. The data collected in this way was submitted to an historical and textual analyses. While the study looked at the period from 1985 to 2010, it also examined how the Indian history informs it before the period chosen for the study. Therefore, it analysed the relationship between the Christians and Hindus in Kandhamal from the British colonial period to 1985. This helped to understand the historical developments of Hinduism and Christianity in India. The study also analysed the various studies that present the nature of violence during the study period. This study follows an empirical qualitative research methodology.⁵⁵

In order to understand how people from different backgrounds understand their Christian identity and to know the depth of the violence the interviewees were selected according to the following categories: 1) caste and tribe, 2) converted and generation Christians, 3) elite and illiterate, and 4) men and women. This study included Hindus also. A different set of questions were prepared for Hindus. The samples were taken from all sections of these groups. Forty five research participants from Hindus and Christians were interviewed. Interviewing Hindus is important for the research to know

⁵⁵ “Qualitative research is a naturalistic, interpretative approach that is concerned with understanding the meaning which people attached to phenomena including actions, decisions, beliefs, values, etc. within the Social world.” D Snape and L. Spencer, “The Foundation of Qualitative Research,” in J. Ritchie and L. Lewis, eds. *Qualitative Research in Practice* (London: SAGE Publications, 2003), 2. K. Durrheim, “Research Design,” in M.T. Blanche, K. Durrheim and D. Painter, eds. *Research in Practice: Applied Methods for the Social Sciences*, 2nd edition (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2006), 33–59. According to Christensen, “qualitative research study is one that collects some type of non-numerical data to answer a research question. Non-numerical data consist of data such as the statements made by people during interviews, written records, pictures, clothing or observed behaviours.” L.B. Christensen, *Experimental Methodology*, Ninth Edition (Boston: University of South Alabama 2004), 39.

their understanding of Christians and how an ordinary Hindu identifies the reason for religious violence. Farmers, teachers, pastors from different denominations, Catholic priests and nuns, lay leaders, social workers, widows of martyrs, re-converted persons and Hindus from ten villages were interviewed.

The study included 30 males and 15 females from 10 villages. The inclusion of females in a study in the Indian context is of great importance because females are the main victims of all forms of violence along the caste system and gender lines. The Stratified Random sampling⁵⁶ was used for this research because the researcher is unable to obtain precise information about the people he intended to interview. The researcher intended to follow the set questions, but more questions were used in order to get a clear and detailed story. For that, the researcher asked extra questions accordingly to interact with the participants.⁵⁷

The researcher collected the data through personal interviews. He disclosed his identity and explain the purpose of the interview to the interviewees before interviewing them. Oria is a common language for Kandhamal people, so the interview was conducted in Oria with a help of research assistants who spoke both English and Oria. Since the researcher used the Oria speaking research assistant as mediators, the interviewees felt free to answer the questions.

The interviews recorded with the permission of the interviewees and translated into English by a researcher's colleague who is an Oria. The researcher followed the interpretive data analysis which includes familiarisation and immersion, inducing themes, coding, elaboration, and finally, interpretation and checking.⁵⁸

After the collection of large volumes of data generated from primary written and oral sources, they were analysed thematically and comparatively in the light of key concepts for the study in order to answer the research questions.

⁵⁶ "If the items selected from each stratum is based on simple random sampling the entire producer, first satisfaction and then simple random sampling, is known as stratified random sampling." C.R. Kothari, *Research Methodology: Methods & Techniques* (New Delhi: New Age International (P) Limited, 2004), 16.

⁵⁷ P. Denis, "Interaction," in P. Denis and R. Ntsimane, eds. *Oral History in a Wounded Country: Interactive Inter-viewing in South Africa* (Scottsville: UKZN Press, 2008), 3.

⁵⁸ M.T. Blanche, etal. eds. "First Steps in Qualitative Data Analysis," in Blanche, *Research in Practice: Applied Methods for the Social Sciences*, 2nd Edition (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2006), 321.

Some participants had personally experienced violence. Such persons had a tendency to share their own difficulties rather than answering the research questions. Those people referred to the counselling centre where Fr. Augustin Singh⁵⁹ is a counsellor. Since the researcher had training in counselling during his pastoral training and has nine years of pastoral experience as well as 11 years of seminary teaching experience, his experience helped him to assess the situation and act accordingly. Since the empirical work was done with the help of local pastors, the researcher took necessary precautions with them to handle the participants in the best way possible.

The credibility of any research depends on whether its findings and results are both reliable and valid. Validity interrogates the accuracy of inferences made at the conclusion of the study and ensures the correctness of the procedures followed to arrive at such conclusions. Generally, validity is the correctness of an inference that is made from the results of a study. Reliability refers to consistency, the stability of the results from the study. Therefore, reliability and validity are two prerequisites necessary for conducting a valid research.⁶⁰ Since this research is designed to follow the scientific methodology to analyse the problem, it produced a valid and reliable conclusion.

This study is geographically limited to Kandhamal District of Odisha. While covering the period from 1985 to 2010, the study paid particular attention to the years 2007 and 2008, when the worse incidents of religious violence happened. The study is based on a sample of forty-five people from the ten mostly affected villages.

1.6 Structure of the thesis: outline of the chapters

This study is developed in 10 chapters that are structured as follows

- i. **Chapter 1:** This chapter provided an introduction to the entire study, highlighting the key issues that studied and explained their importance. The chapter identified the background of the study with a brief overview of the situation in Kandhamal. It also gave a broader picture of the theoretical framework used as a tool to inform this study in order to interrogate the central research question.

⁵⁹ Fr. Augustine Singh, PhD in Counselling Psychology and Major in Clinical Counselling, Director of Counselling Department of the Archdiocese of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India, shares a part of the Social Work Department of the Archdiocese, called 'Jana Vikas' based in Kandhamal.

⁶⁰ Op. cit., L. B. Christensen, 206.

- ii. **Chapter 2:** This chapter narrated the socio-economic and religious history of the people of Kandhamal, particularly about the Kondhs and Panas. It explained how Christianity came into Kandhamal and made changes in the social life of the Kandhamal people. It also dealt with the Europeans' attitude towards Indians.
- iii. **Chapter 3:** This chapter presented historical reasons for the development of raising Hindu fundamentalism in India as a whole and the emergence of Hindu nationalism. It also described the origin and development of different organisations and their ideologies and its impact on Kandhamal.
- iv. **Chapter 4:** This chapter explained how Indian Christians faced the challenges of Indian Hindu nationalist leaders by formulating new theologies, worship pattern and church structure, in order to make Christianity more Indian.
- v. **Chapter 5:** This chapter narrated a detailed account of the religious communal violence that took place in various parts of India from 1985 to 2010, and it also explained the background and details of the violence.
- vi. **Chapter 6:** This chapter explained the origin and development of Hindu nationalism and of religious communalism in Odisha, particularly in Kandhamal. It also gave a detailed account of violence faced by the Kandhamal Christians from 1985 to 2006.
- vii. **Chapter 7:** This chapter described the background and details of the violent events that took place in Kandhamal from 2007 to 2010.
- viii. **Chapter 8:** This Chapter described the salient features of the violence and also explained the impact of violence on different sections of people in Kandhamal. It also recorded how different sections of people played their role during and after the violence.

- ix. Chapter 9:** This chapter described in detail how the Kandhamal Christians responded to the religious communal violence. It also presented the initiatives taken by various groups to bring peace in Kandhamal.
- x. Chapter 10:** This chapter analysed the various developments and events that led to the religious communal violence in India, particularly in Kandhamal. The theories were used as tools to interrogate the sources
- xi. Chapter 11:** Conclusion

CHAPTER TWO
ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIANITY IN
KANDHAMAL, ODISHA

2.1 Geographical setting of Kandhamal

Odisha⁶¹ is one of the States in the east coast of India. It is famous for its forests and hills. The forests cover nearly 44% of the total land of the State. Kandhamal⁶² District is located in central Odisha. The dividing of Phulbani District into two different districts, Kandhamal and Boudh, brought the existence of Kandhamal revenue district on the 1st of January 1994. In Kandhamal, climate is sub-tropical hot and dry in summer, but dry and cold in winter. Kandhamal District covers a geographical area of 8021 sq. km, which is 4.8% of the total area of the State. There are about 2415 villages in the district. The entire district lies in high-altitude zone with inter-spreading, inaccessible terrain of hilly ranges and narrow valleys.⁶³

Most of the district's land area (66%) is covered with dense forestlands and lofty mountains rich in greeny hayfields at the attitude of 2000–3000 feet.⁶⁴ The district is endowed with the beauty of nature. It has diverse wildlife, places of scenic beauty, healthy climate and serpentine stony roads for the travellers. Its other attractions are panoramic coffee gardens, pine jungles, gravel roads, hills and waterfalls, virgin forest and typical tribal village life. Kandhamal is also endowed with vast minor forest and agricultural produces which incidentally form the basis of its industry. The district has many cottages and agro-based industry that processes forest and agricultural products. It also possesses ample graphite reserves in Tumudibandha Block.⁶⁵

⁶¹ "Odisha is one of the 29 states of India, formerly known as Orissa. The name of the state was changed from Orissa to Odisha and the name of the language from Oriya to Odia in 2011." *The Times of India*. Mar. 24, 2011.

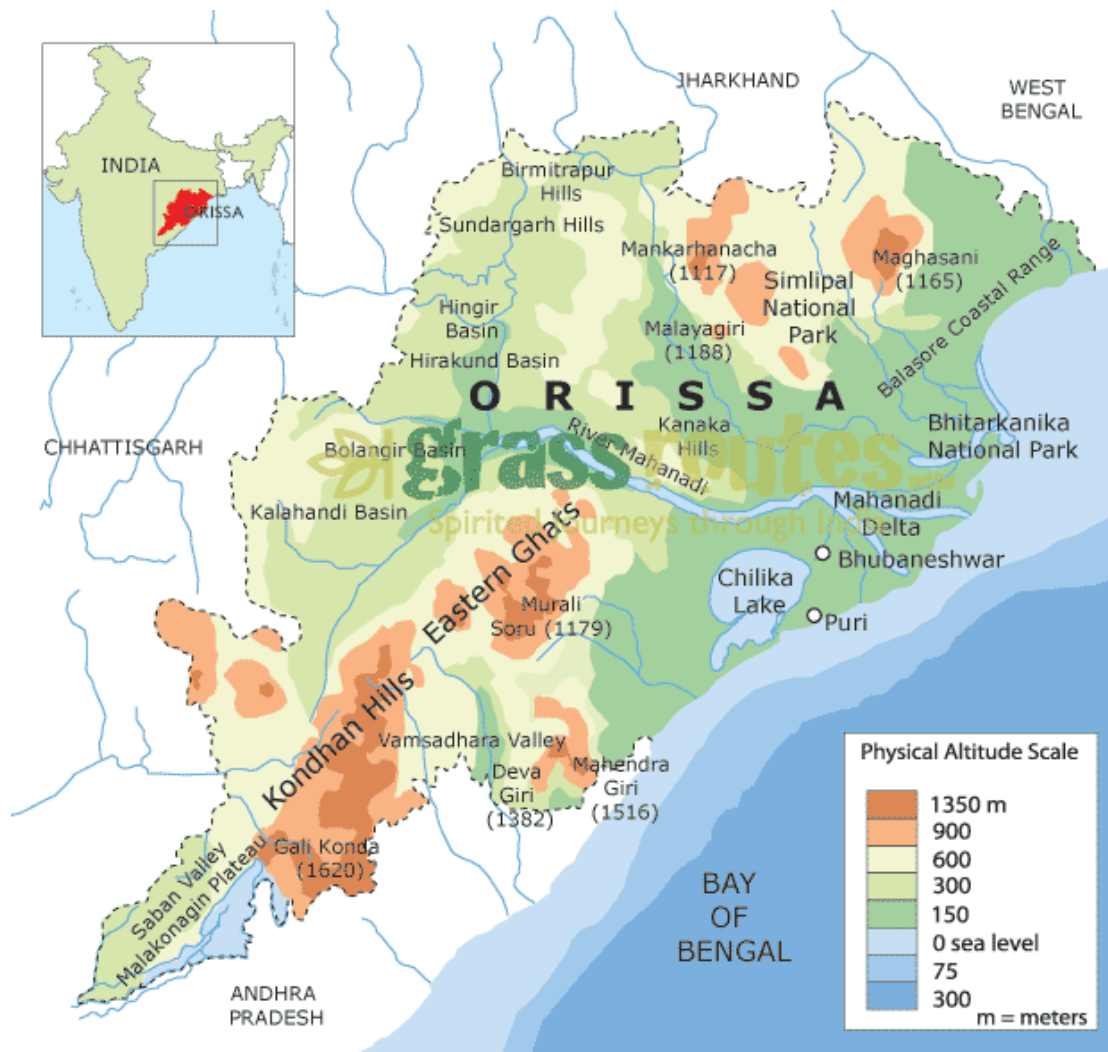
⁶² "Kandhamal or Kondhamala or Kondmal is a given name by outsiders. The word *Kond* has been spelled differently like *Kondha*, *Kandha*, *Khandh*, *Kondh*, *Khund*, *Gond* and *Konds*. In Odia language, *Kondha* means a kind of root, and 'mala' means hills and forest. Kondhamala refers to the place of hills and forest where roots and fruits are plenty. But the inhabitants called themselves *Kuinga*, which means people of upper land, and their dwelling place is *Kui-Deena*, which means upper land." Krishan Sharma, *The Konds of Orissa: An Anthropometric Study* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1979), 103.

⁶³ Amos Sutton, *Orissa and Its Evangelization* (Calcutta: Wilkins and Son, 1850), 13; Cf. James Peggs, *A History of the General Baptist Mission in Orissa* (London: Paternoster Row, 1846), 109; Cf. Saumya Uma, *Kandhamal: The Law Must Change Its Course* (Delhi: Multi Action Research Group, 2010), 1.

⁶⁴ Barbara M. Boal, *The Church in the Kond Hills* (Nagpur: NCCI, 1963), 4.

⁶⁵ Op. cit., Krishna Sharma, 15; Cf. Amos Sutton, 14; James Peggs, 111; Barbara M. Boal, 5.

2.1.1 The map of geographical location of Odisha



2.2 Ethnic groups

About 90% of people in Odisha live in rural areas. There are 62 tribes in Odisha comprising 25% of the State's population, and the rest of the 75% are Dalits and caste groups. Each tribal society is well organised and has its own distinct language, culture, customs, religion and tradition. As per 2001 census, the population of Kandhamal District was 648,201. The tribal population was 336,809, the Dalit population was 109,506 and the rest were other high-caste communities.⁶⁶

A tribe is a distinct group of people living in the forest, dependent on land and forest for their livelihood. They are largely self-sufficient indigenous people and not

⁶⁶ Op. cit., Barbara M. Boal, 2; Cf. B.B. Chaudhuri and Arun Bandopadhyay, ed. *Tribes, Forest and Social Formation in Indian History* (New Delhi: Indian History Congress, 2004), 82.

integrated into the national society. Tribals are not included in the Hindu *Varna Sasthra* and are considered as an ‘outcaste’.⁶⁷ As such, they are not part of the traditional four-fold *Varna* (caste) system consisting of the hereditary Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra classes. People who belong to these four groups are considered as the caste groups.⁶⁸

The term ‘Dalit’ derives from the Sanskrit root *dal* meaning ‘broken, scattered, crushed, destroyed, ground-down, downtrodden, or oppressed’. The term has been adopted by the historically untouchables and oppressed classes of people today. ‘Dalit’ refers to one’s caste rather than a class; it applies to the members of those menial castes who borne the stigma of ‘untouchability’ because of their filthy and lowly traditional occupations. Dalits are ‘outcasts’ falling outside the *Varna* system.⁶⁹

According to the Hindu *Varna Sasthra*, the caste structure is as follows. The *Brahmin* is a caste comprising those engaged in scriptural teaching and learning, crucial for the continuation of knowledge. It is believed that this section of people is born out of God’s head. The *Kshatriya* undertakes all kinds of public services, such as administration, maintenance of law and order, and defence. These people are born out of God’s chest. The *Vaishya* engage in commerce, craft and farming activity as businessmen. These groups of people are born out of God’s waist. The *Shudra* are semi-skilled and unskilled labourers believed to be born out of God’s feet. The rigidity of the system is that members of the lower castes were precluded from aspiring to climb higher status; therefore, their progress in economic matters was curtailed.⁷⁰

The caste system is a process of assigning occupations to different groups of people in the society. It dictates the type of occupations a person can engage in and the social status that one can have. Caste system is an aspect of the Hindu religion. Castes are ranked in a hierarchical order that determines the behaviour of one member of society over another. Dalits are not included in the hierarchical order. They are

⁶⁷ L. P. Vidyarthi and B. K. Rai, *The Tribal Culture of India* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1976), 25.

⁶⁸ Nirav Chokshi, *The Indian Caste System* (Ahmedabad: Nirav Chokshi’s School of Life, 2014), 31.

⁶⁹ Mark W. Muesse, *The Hindu Traditions: A Concise Introduction* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 78.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 75; Cf. Nirav Chokshi, 31. Rajendra K. Sharma, *Indian Society: Institution and Change* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 2004), 15. B.T. Gopalakrishna, *Chaturvarna: Unified Theory of Hindu Caste* (Bangalore: B.T. Gopalakrishna, 2013), 62–66.

considered as outsiders of the caste system, impure and polluting. Therefore, they are excluded and isolated, physically and socially, from other groups of society.⁷¹

People are positioned as tribals, Dalits or other caste groups by the dominant caste group based on their Hindu mythology. Herman's Dialogical Self Theory explains that identity is a product of social interaction which creates groups with specific characteristics.⁷² According to Dirks, "caste has been the site of collisions between patriarchy and tradition; in its valorization of Brahmanic ideas around the status of women and the general subservience of women to marriage rules and domestic conditions, caste has simultaneously preserved the patriarchy of premodern society and worked to sanction the continued oppression and exclusion of women in nationalist reimaginings of the past. Caste may be the precipitate of the modern, but it is still the specter of the past."⁷³ Though the Hindu mythology is used for justifying the categorisation of people in groups, the identity of tribal, Dalit and caste groups is mostly based on their context boundaries, social status through their occupations, and characteristics. The following section will help us to understand this fact.

2.2.1 The Konds

Most of the inhabitants of the hills belong to the Konds⁷⁴ or Khunds/Kui people. The 'Kond/Kui' is a generic term used for many subgroups such as Kuinga, Domanga, Sitaranga, Gahinga and Goudanga. Their first language is *kui*, a Dravidian dialect. These groups share some commonality and have some differences too. They were the rulers of the land in which they lived. They originally lived in the plains, but the arrival of Aryans pushed them into the hills and mountains.⁷⁵ The land is their main source of

⁷¹ L. Stanislaus, *The Liberative Mission of the Church among Dalit Christians* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 1999), 3.

⁷² Op. cit., H. J. M. Herman and Hermans-Konopka, 127.

⁷³ Nicholas B. Dirks, *Caste of Mind: Colonialism and the making of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 17.

⁷⁴ "The origin of Kondhs and the derivation of the word 'Kondh' are obscure. The name Kondh is given to the tribe by outsiders. 'Kondh' probably is a Telugu word, meaning hill or mountain. They prefer to call themselves as *Kuiloka* or *Kuienju*, which derives from the word *Kui*, the language they speak. Some scholars call them *Kui* people. Some scholars are of the opinion that the word might have been derived from the Tamil word *khand*, a hill or *kandra*, an arrow. Other thinks that it is identifiable with Oriya word *khanda* meaning an area of land calculated by the quantity of the seed sown in it. There is another theory says that once they lived in the plains of Orissa. They got the name from the Oriya word for a sword, which is *khanda*. The *khand* (sword) is the totem of the tribe." Cf. K.P. Bahadur, *Castes, Tribes and Culture of India. Bengal, Bihar and Orissa*, Vol.III, pp. 18–19; Barbara M. Boal, *The Church in the Kond Hills* (Nagpur: NCCI, 1963), 21; R.V. Russell, *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India*, Vol. III (London: 1916), pp. 464–465.

⁷⁵ According to Barbara M. Boal, "No mythology or legend yet discovered furnishes any clue to their origin or place of descent. They believe themselves to have existed in Orissa from the beginning."

livelihood. They hold 77% of the cultivable land.⁷⁶ Until 2002, the Konds were included in the list of Scheduled Castes (SCs), but through a Presidential Order, they were changed to that of Scheduled Tribes (STs).⁷⁷

The identity of the Konds changed over time. When lived in the plains, they were called Dravidians; after migrating to the hills, they were identified as hill people and came to be called Konds. After the entry of European Christian missionaries into Kandhamal in the 1860s, few Konds converted to Christianity and got yet another new identity as Christians. In 1950, the Indian government developed a list of tribes and gave them the status of ST. In the recent past, the Hindu fundamentalists gave them a new Hindu identity by introducing Hindu Brahmanical rituals and festivals to them.⁷⁸ According to the Dialogical Self Theory, one's identity is a process of positioning and repositioning of oneself.⁷⁹ The Konds were compelled to change their positions according to the given circumstances over a period of time, which gave them different identities which are explained in the later part of this chapter.

2.2.2 The Panas

The Panas (also called *Panos* or *Doms*) is one of the biggest groups of Dalits in the Orissa province accounting for about 17% of the State's population. The Panas are comprised of different clans such as *Pans* or *Panwa*, *Chiks*, *Gandas* and *Pankas*. They lived among the Konds.⁸⁰ There is less information available regarding the origin of the Panas,⁸¹ including the reason for their migration to the hills from the plains.⁸² They are not tribal, nor are they socially unacceptable to the Hindus. They are designated as

Barbara M. Boal, *The Kondh: Human Sacrifice and Religious Change* (New Delhi: Inter India Publications, 1997), 21.

⁷⁶ Op. cit., Krishna Sharma, 16.

⁷⁷ Sathianathan Clarke, Deenabandhu Manchala and Philip Vinod Peacock, eds. *Dalit Theology in the Twenty-First Century* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 185.

⁷⁸ Op. cit., Barbara M. Boal, *The Kondh: Human Sacrifice and...*, 24.

⁷⁹ Op. cit., H. J. M. Herman and Hermans-Konopka, A. 127.

⁸⁰ Op. cit., E. T. Dalton, 286.

⁸¹ "There is no clear record of the origin of the Panas. They are thought to have been Hindus but have accepted the beliefs and rituals of their hosts. For example in the Kond hills, they adopted the language, culture and beliefs of the Konds." Op. cit., Barbara M. Boal, *The Church in the Kond Hills*, 22.

⁸² According to J. Pathy, "All accounts suggest that the Konds purchased *Meriah* through the Hindu low caste Panas, who lived in and around the Kond villages. Existing evidence points to the immigration of this caste to Kandhamal less than 200 years ago. They came after being exiled from some of the neighbouring Hindu kingdoms for their alleged involvement in thefts and robbery. The Konds gave them shelter in their villages, and they in turn acted as mediators between the Konds and Oriyas, and worked as weavers and traders." J. Pathy, "Colonial Ethnography of the Kandha. White man's Burden or Political Expediency?" *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 30, No. 4, 1995, 224.

outcaste in the caste system of the Hindus.⁸³This could be one of the possible reasons for their migration to the hills to avoid the caste stigma. R. K. Nayak is of the opinion that the Panas were once considered as tribals because they adopted the beliefs, culture and language of Kondhs and lived with them, but after 1950, they were included in the list of SCs.⁸⁴ The Panas have their own dialect, but they are quick to learn any language that is prevalent in their surroundings. Thus in Kandhamal, a large number of Panas call themselves *Kui* Panas, since they adopted *Kui* as their mother tongue. Though the origin of the Panas lies in obscurity, they have been part of the *Kui*-speaking community and have been influenced by the beliefs and practices of the Kondhs. Their lifestyle and religion are firmly rooted in the Kond culture.⁸⁵ They hold 9% of the cultivatable land. The majority of the Panas (90%) are Christians who mainly speak either *Kui* or *Odia*.⁸⁶

The Panas also struggled with their multiple identities in their history. The process of positioning and repositioning among the Panas can be explained by the Dialogical Self Theory as follows. It is not clear what language they spoke before they migrated to the Kond hills. During that time, they were identified as outcaste. When they migrated and settled in Kandhamal, they adopted the culture, religion and language of the dominant Kondhs, and identified themselves with Kondhs as tribals. The majority of the Panas accepted Christianity from 1930 onwards; thus, their identity further changed as Christians. In 1950, they were identified as SC by the Indian government.⁸⁷ However, the Hindu fundamentalists classified them as ‘Christian Others’. The positioning and repositioning of the Panas in different times and situations gave them multiple identities which created problems for them at different times.

2.2.3 The Oriyas

The Oriyas are the inhabitants of the plains throughout the State of Odisha. The Oriyas descended from a seafaring Hindu empire that extended its influence from Sri Lanka to Myanmar in the year c. 75 BCE, and all the way to Malaysia and Indonesia.⁸⁸ Over 220

⁸³ W. Brown, “Description of the Khunds or Kundhas,” *The Calcutta Christian Observer*, No. 59, Apr. 1837, 3.

⁸⁴ Radhakant Nayak and Soren Nabor, *Kondhs: A Handbook for Development* (New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 1990), 10.

⁸⁵ Society for Evaluation, *The Panas: Study of a Scheduled Caste Community in Orissa* (Bhubaneswar: National Institute of Social Work and Social Sciences, 1995-1996), 2.

⁸⁶ Biswamoy Pati, *Situating Social History ORISSA (1800–1997)* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman Limited, 2001), 13; Cf., B.B. Chaudhuri and Arun Bandopadhyay, eds. *Tribes, Forest and Social Formation in Indian History* (New Delhi: Indian History Congress, 2004), 82; Cf. Op. cit., Saumya Uma, 1.

⁸⁷ Op. cit., Society for Evaluation, 4.

⁸⁸ Durga Prasad Patnaik, *Palm Leaf Etchings of Orissa* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1989), 3.

people groups use the Oriya language as their mother tongue. Oriya is an Indo-Aryan language. The major caste Hindus are Brahman, Khandait, Rajput, Ahir, Mahishya, Gauda, etc.⁸⁹ Oriyas infiltrated and settled in Kandhamal hills about 200 ago. There are scattered and quite separate colonies of Oriyas in Kandhamal.⁹⁰ Surprisingly, the identity of Oriyas did not change in spite of their migration to the Kond hills probably because of their dominant caste identity and their socio-political power.

2.2.4 The other communities

The Ghasi/Ghasiya/Ghasia is a primitive people group also living in the Kandhamal hills. Their villages are found near the villages of the Konds and Panas. They are scattered over different districts of Odisha. Their primary and traditional occupations were scavenging and agricultural labourers. Later, they became weavers and supplied textiles to the Konds and Panas. Now, they have given up their traditional occupations and do farming in the forest land and rear domestic animals.⁹¹ Socially, they are identified with Panas as Dalits or SC. They are small in numbers in Kandhamal. Their origin is with Odiya. They are associated with caste Hindus in the coastal regions and with the Konds and Panas in the hills. In Kandhamal, they have very little or no land. They adopted the tradition, culture and customs of the Konds and Panas. The Ghasi community embraced Christianity in the 1930s. They have improved their socio-economic status through their hard work, and now they give increased importance to the education of their children.⁹²

The Sauras/Savaras/Soras is another tribal community living in Kandhamal. This community also lives in other high hill ranges of Gajapati, Kalahandi and Koraput Districts of Odisha. They live away from the Kond and Pana villages. They are more primitive than the Konds. They depend on forest for their survival. They keep domestic animals and cultivate paddy, ginger, turmeric, grams and millets. The traditional life of men and women was barbaric and some wore no dress, had no education and had a

⁸⁹ Op. cit., Biswamoy Pati, 17; Cf. M. N. Srinivas, *Caste in Modern India: and Other Essays* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1977), 43.

⁹⁰ Op. cit., Barbara M. Boal, *The Church in the Kond Hills*, 3.

⁹¹ K. S. Singh, *India's Communities: National Series*, Vol. IV, A-G (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 997.

⁹² Udayanath Bishoyi, *Flames of Faith in Kandhamal* (Bhubaneswar: Shades Publications, 2018), 98.

typical aboriginal lifestyle.⁹³ However, at present, their socio-political and religious life has improved. The majority of them have embraced Christian faith.⁹⁴

2.3 Socio-economic background

Odisha is one of the poorest States in India, and Kandhamal is one of the poorest districts in Odisha. About 78% of the tribals are below the poverty line. In addition to agriculture, people also involve in handicraft such as Dokra, Terra-Cotta, Cane and Bamboo work.⁹⁵

2.3.1 Socio-economic background of the Konds

The early history of the Konds is not clearly recorded. One theory is that they were of Dravidian race driven from their land on the coastal plains of eastern India to the wild hill tracts of the Eastern Ghats during the Aryan invasion.⁹⁶ They have preserved their culture and language down the ages. The community-centred way of life and inter-dependence were the essence of Konds society.⁹⁷

The Konds were traditionally said to be bold and upright in their conduct, proud of their position as landholders and tenacious of their rights. They were truthful and honest, unflinchingly loyal to their leaders and lovers of liberty. They practised patriarchy. A strong feeling of clanship among all classes of people characterised the Konds' social set-up. The people were divided into localised clans, the relations between clans being characterised either by friendliness or by hostility. The boundaries of each clan were fixed.⁹⁸

Their houses were made up of wooden logs, planks and a thatched-grass roof. The Konds lived on agriculture, forest product and hunting. They produced crops like turmeric, oilseeds, ginger, herbs and honey. They had a large number of bullocks, buffaloes and numerous flocks of fine goats and abundance of pigs. They were poor, even though they were known for their hard work. Since they were not exposed to outside their territory, they depended on the Panas for the sale of their products.⁹⁹

⁹³ S. N. Tripathy, *Tribals in Transition* (New Delhi: Discovering Publishing House, 1999), 15.

⁹⁴ Op. cit., Udayanath Bishoyi, 102.

⁹⁵ Op. cit., Krishna Sharma, 105.

⁹⁶ Op. cit., Barbara M. Boal, *The Kondh: Human Sacrifice and...*, 1.

⁹⁷ S. D. Ponraj, *Tribal Challenge and the Church's Response* (Madhupur: Mission Educational Books, 1996), 80.

⁹⁸ Op. cit., Dasarathi Swaro, 129.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 130.

2.3.2 Socio-economic background of the Panas

The Panas' hereditary occupation was weaving. They wove their own clothing and that of the Konds. Traditionally, Panas were the major suppliers of garments to the tribals.¹⁰⁰ They were skilful basket makers. Their baskets were in high demand in the tribal market because the tribals needed the baskets for various storage purposes. Many were small-scale traders. The Panas were also talented musicians. Their music had been performed on the occasions of marriages, initiation, death and various other ceremonies of many non-tribal families in the area.¹⁰¹

They worked as messengers, carrying the summons to councils or fieldwork. They were also hired as labourers for cultivating the land of Kond landlords. Although the Panas were from a variety of occupational backgrounds such as washer men, blacksmiths and carpenters, they were all kept in the category of SC.¹⁰² SCs and STs are official designations given to various groups of socially disadvantaged indigenous people in India. According to Indian law, Dalit (SCs) Christians and Muslims are not eligible for reservations for education and government employment unlike other Dalits belonging to the Hindu, Sikh, Jain and Buddhist communities.¹⁰³

Many of the Panas had completely adopted Kui language and culture, and they appeared to be one community with the Konds. The Panas were engaged in most of the financial transactions of the Konds. The Pana traders collected agricultural surpluses and forest products from the Konds door to door in exchange of cash or any other items they need. The Panas also knew the Konds' economic cycle and their seasonal necessities very well.¹⁰⁴ There were a small number of *Sundi* people living in the villages along with the Panas. They were engaged in trading.¹⁰⁵

2.3.3 Socio-economic background of the Oriyas

The Oriyas were the dominant race settled in the hills. They established their link with the people of the plains and their strategic positions in the hills, and became mainly shopkeepers and traders. They were economically powerful and had control over the

¹⁰⁰ Op. cit., Society for Evaluation, 39.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 38.

¹⁰² Op. cit., Rajendra K. Sharma, 13.

¹⁰³ Op. cit., Sathianathan Clarke, Deenabandhu Manchala and Philip Vinod Peacock, eds. 185.

¹⁰⁴ Op. cit., Society for Evaluation, 13.

¹⁰⁵ Op. cit., W. Brown. 4; Cf. Victor E. W. Hayward, ed. *Churches in the Missionary Situation: Studies in Growth and Response* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1966), 226.

tribal people of Kandhamal. Tribal people did not have the habit of saving money. Their hard-earned money was not sufficient for a daily living because of their food habits and culture. They spent most of their earning on alcohol and food. They did not save money for any major expenses such as weddings, funerals and religious rituals. So, they used to borrow money from moneylenders at a high rate of interest, hoping that they would be able to repay it through the income from their lands. Whenever the crops failed, the land either became the property of the moneylender or had to be sold for the repayment of loans. The lands would be mostly bought by the Panas or Oriyas, and the Konds ended up becoming labourers in their own lands.¹⁰⁶

2.4 Religious and cultural background

Religious practices in the Kandhamal region were based on a reverence for nature which revolved around the forest and the forces of nature. The killing of plants and animals became the way of life for their food. They had a precise knowledge of nature's laws and limits, as well as a profound respect for the spirit world that manifests through nature.¹⁰⁷

2.4.1 Religious and cultural background of the Konds

The Konds were basically farmers, so all their religious beliefs had reverence to the fertilisation of the Earth. There was a vague belief in the existence of a Supreme Being among the Kandhamal dwellers. There were two creator gods worshipped by the people of two different regions. In the Eastern area, the *Tanu* or *Tari Penu* (Earth God) was believed to be the creator of all things, while on the Western side, the *Piteri Penu* was the great Creator God.¹⁰⁸ This belief did not preclude the belief in many other spirits. A *Penu* or spirit God may travel all over the Kond hills but would return to a particular spot for an important sacrifice. The *Loha Penu* or some local spirit may dwell in a certain large tree or a group of trees on the crest of the hill. Other spirits might dwell in rocks of particular shape and certain animals.¹⁰⁹

They did not worship their God in temples but at shrines in the forest. There were no temples, and no buildings were dedicated to the service of any deity.¹¹⁰ The chief

¹⁰⁶ Barpujari, *Problem of the Hill Tribes: North-East Frontier 1822–1942*, 11; Cf. Op. cit., Barbara M. Boal, *The Kondh: Human Sacrifice and...*, 13.

¹⁰⁷ Felix Padel, *The Sacrifice of Human Being* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), 1.

¹⁰⁸ Amitabha Sarkar and Samira Dasgupta, *Spectrum of Tribal Bastar* (Delhi: Agam Kala Prakashan, 1996), 90.

¹⁰⁹ Op. cit., E. T. Dalton, 296.

¹¹⁰ W. Brown. "Description of the Khunds or Kundhas," *The Calcutta Christian Observer*, No. 59. Apr. 1837. (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1837), 9.

deities of Konds were *Tari Penu* (The Earth Goddess) and *Bura Penu* (The Sky God). Human sacrifice was the greatest sacrifice of the Kui people to the Earth Goddess (*Tari Penu*). It was known as *Meriah* sacrifice.

The Konds offered sacrifices at a yearly festival, on the full moon day in January. Human sacrifice was a social institution as much as it was a religious rite. Sacrifices were made either for the propitiation of the Gods or for prevention of diseases and natural calamities. The earth Goddess *Darni* was periodically propitiated for the maintenance of the fertility of the soil. The flesh of the victim was believed to be endowed with a magical power of fertilizing the land. Thus, pieces of the victim's flesh were buried in fields. They had a belief that the blood caused the redness of the turmeric and the tears caused rain. So the method of putting the victim to death was made deliberately painful. They purchased the victim. Unless bought with a price, they were not deemed acceptable to the Goddess. Victims from their own tribe were not procurable. So they used agents to get the *Meriah*. The *Meriah* could be of any caste or religion. The British called the human sacrifice as "*Meriah* sacrifice". *Meriah* was not a Kui term. *Meriah* refers to the victim of the sacrifice. "*Mervi*" was the term in Kui but the Khonds called the victims as '*Toki*' or '*Kedu*'.¹¹¹

It was stopped by the British in 1861. Thereafter, they started to sacrifice buffaloes.¹¹²

The Konds had folksongs, folktales and some traditional music with drums. They were fond of music, dance, and wine and tended to be carefree and expressive in nature. Equality was the basic principle of the tribal culture. The land was equally divided among households. There were usually a village headman and a head priest, both of whom belonged to particular lineages. Women were given the freedom to express their views. They were given the same standard of sexual morality as men. Divorce was relatively easy, and widows and divorcees could remarry without any stigma.¹¹³

¹¹¹ B. C. Ray, ed. *Tribals of Orissa: The Changinh Socio-Economic Profile, 1984*, Reprint (Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 2010), 69. Cf. Op. cit. W. Brown. 5; Cf., Op. cit., John Campbell, C. B., 51–55; Cf. Dasarathi Swaro, *The Christian Missionaries in Orissa* (Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1990), 131. Cf. Edward Tuite Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal* (Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, 1872), 286.

¹¹² Op. cit., Felix Padel, 3. Cf. Dasarathi Swaro, 131.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 18.

2.4.2 Religious and cultural background of the Panas

The Panas had adopted the religion and the Kui language of the Konds. The Panas played the role of agents who would supply humans to the Konds for sacrifice. Generally, they either purchased the child from their parents or kidnapped them.¹¹⁴ The Konds shared their village festivals with the Panas on a more equal footing than any other peoples and also allowed them to hold lands. However, the Konds regarded the Panas as inferior people and exercised enough tribal discipline to keep the two communities separate.¹¹⁵

The Oriyas entered into the Kond hills to do business and eventually settled down there permanently. They were caste Hindus, and their culture and languages were completely different from the tribal people of the hills. Marriages were usually arranged within the respective tribe and caste. Polygamy was not practised in Kandhamal. Prostitution and adultery were considered to be a serious unlawful act and punishable crime.¹¹⁶

2.5 The political background

The Konds had an explicit and clearly defined political system that was later influenced by outsiders. Formerly, some Konds were residing in the territories ruled by the kings of *Khurda*, and the rest were under the control of the *Patros*. The *Patros* were individuals appointed by the *Rajas* for representing them. They usually belonged to the Brahmin (high-caste Hindus) community. The *Moliko* was the accredited head in the Kond society who took the service of a Pana called the *Digalo*. The *Digalo* was the spokesman of the *Moliko* who couldn't speak Oriya. In their political system, after the *Rajas* (Local King) and *Patros* came the *Molikos*, *Digalos* and *Podhanos*.¹¹⁷ There was a *Podhano* in every village. The *Podhano* was a title that was inherited from the ancestors. Only the descendants of a chief who had the capacity to exercise the office could hold power. The hill villages were situated near each other and put under the system of the *Muttahs*,¹¹⁸ a *Muttah* was a small area with a group of villages therein. There was a headman appointed over each *Muttah* who was known as *Patro* or *Bisoyee*.

¹¹⁴ Op. cit., John Campbell, C. B. *A Personal Narratives...*, 52; Cf. Op. cit., E.T. Dalton, 286.

¹¹⁵ Op. cit., E. T. Dalton, 299. Cf. Barbara M. Boal, *The Kondh: Human Sacrifice and...*, 3.

¹¹⁶ Op. cit., Barbara M. Boal, *The Church in the Kond Hills*, 12.

¹¹⁷ Radhakant Nayak and Soreng Nabor, *Kondhs: A Handbook for Development* (New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 1990), 31.

¹¹⁸ Op. cit., Barbara M. Boal, *The Church in the Kond Hills*, 8.

Every village in the hill also had its own chief. The *Patro* had a number of guards under his control. All these *Patros* or *Bisoyees* were Oriyas. The *Patros* was a hereditary office.¹¹⁹

There were small rulers called *Rajas* who collected tribute from the hill villages through *Patros*. The leadership of the Konds was powerful and deserved great respect from the members of the community. The headman of village was seen as the symbol of the village people's well-being. After the entry of British into the Kond hills, the British government had entrusted the *Patros* for the good order of their *Muttahs*. The Oriyas partly subdued the Konds, but the hill tribe was always loyal to the Oriya rulers.¹²⁰

There was a *Panchayat*¹²¹ in all the areas where the Panas lived. The role of the *Panchayat* was crucial in developing the social, economic and religious life of the Panas. The village headman was called *Bada Nayak*. He was the senior head who was responsible for the well-being of the community, and he had the last say in village meetings. The *Sana Nayak* was the assistant head of the village who helped the *Bada Nayak*.¹²²

2.5.1 Relationship between the Panas and Konds

The Konds and Panas had been dwelling together for generations. The both exchanged their culture, reciprocated to each other socio-economically as well as shared modern objectives with one another.¹²³ Since the Panas were considered inferior to the Konds, no intermarriage normally took place, and inter-dining, as a rule, was avoided. If it occurred, the entire family had to undergo a ritual cleansing.¹²⁴

Customarily, every Kond village nominated three Panas for specific positions. The first position was that of the *Barik* which was social in nature. The *Barik*'s duty was to assist the village headman who was a Kond in arranging village meetings, and he acted as messenger between different villages and also as mediator between the

¹¹⁹ Op. cit., W. Brown. 8.

¹²⁰ Op. cit., John Campbell, C. B., 19; Cf., W. Francis (Comp.), Imperial Gazetteer of India Provincial Series: Madras (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1908), 227.

¹²¹ "*Panchayat* is an assembly of people which is constituted to settle disputes or to rectify a social transgression or wrongdoing within a community, according to its code of conduct." Op. cit., Society for Evaluation, 27.

¹²² Ibid., 32.

¹²³ Ibid., 102.

¹²⁴ Op. cit., Barbara M. Boal, *The Church in the Kond Hills*, 23.

Konds and outsiders. He helped them in interacting with government officials if required.¹²⁵ The second position was that of the *goudia* or herdsman who was responsible for economic development. The Konds could not tend their cattle because they were preoccupied with the cultivation of their hill plots. The Panas served as *goudia* for them, for which they were given daily portions of cooked food. An annual grant of paddy rights and other items needed by the Panas were also given.¹²⁶ Finally, the Panas were employed as *Jhatenis* (sweepers). Women were mainly employed for this job. They received their remuneration mostly in kind.¹²⁷

Although the Panas were considered as inferior to the Konds, those among them who supplied human for *Meriah* sacrifices were treated equally. The Panas who supplied sacrificial offerings were given a turmeric bath along with the elders of the village as a sign of acceptance as equals to the Konds. One of the important responsibilities of the Panas was to supply humans as offering to the sacrifice.¹²⁸

2.6 The British intervention in the Kond hills

Central Odisha was divided into a number of small kingdoms. The plain areas were directly under the control of the kings. The mountain and forest areas were inhabited by tribal people ruled over on the king's behalf by Hindu chiefs. The smaller kings generally had allegiance and tribute to greater kings.¹²⁹ In 1633, in the Mahanadi delta of Hariharpur at Balasore in Odisha, the British East India Company established their factories. In 1651, an English factory was set up at Hooghly in Bengal. Using a combination of outright battles and skilful alliances with local rulers, the Company brought entire European trade in India into to its control by 1769. Major-General Robert Clive (1756–1767), Commander-in-Chief of British India, founded the military and political domination of the East India Company in Bengal–Odisha. Clive defeated the Mughal forces at Buxar in Bihar province and brought Bengal, Bihar and Odisha under the East India Company administration in 1765.¹³⁰ Kandhamal was part of the Bengal administration. In 1803, the British invaded Odisha and took possession of it. They ruled over the coastal area directly and indirectly ruled over the inland formalised

¹²⁵ Ibid., 11.

¹²⁶ Op. cit., Society for Evaluation, 62.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 70.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 56.

¹²⁹ Op. cit., Felix Padel, 36.

¹³⁰ Kanchanmoy Mojumdar, *Changing Tribal Life in British Orissa* (New Delhi: Kaveri Books, 1998), 11.

through treaties and tribute. But some kings refused to pay tribute even after negotiations and imprisonment. In spite of strong opposition from local rulers, the Agency administration was set up in the Kond hills in 1830.¹³¹

2.6.1 The Ghumsur wars

Dhunagi Bunge, the Hindu *rajah* (king) of Ghumsur, was unwilling to pay the revenue. So, the British decided to annex the Ghumsur kingdom in 1835 and issued a warrant for his arrest, but the *rajah* fled to the inaccessible mountains of Kandhamal.¹³²

The Konds of this region regarded Dhunagi Bunge as their *rajah* and offered shelter to him. Before 1835, the British had no direct connection with the Konds, but the East India Company received tribute from the Konds through local kings. In November 1835, the British army invaded Ghumsur¹³³ and annexed it. Thus began the Ghumsur wars.¹³⁴ The guerrilla warfare continued in 1836 and 1837. However, the British army suffered due to the outbreak of malaria and could not continue to stay in the forest to fight the war.¹³⁵

In January 1836, the British commanded an army of nearly 2000 soldiers deployed in 12 posts. The Konds came to the British camp and surrendered to the government. But some soldiers stole chickens and other goods from Kond villagers which turned the Konds hostile again. So on 5 March 1836, the British officers were attacked by a large force of the Konds. Two officers, four women and thirteen soldiers were killed. The killing of these two British officers provoked a passionate hatred for the Konds.¹³⁶ Countless Konds were shot like wild animals; some were seized and hung up on trees. Their villages were destroyed by the British army. Large numbers of the Konds were forced to do coolie service for the British army. Their villages and grain stores were burnt down. This was the first British contact with the Konds and led to the subjugation of the Konds everywhere.¹³⁷ The main Hindu chiefs were hunted alive or

¹³¹ Ibid., 12.

¹³² Op. cit., John Campbell, C. B. *A Personal Narratives...*, 30.

¹³³ “Ghumsur was a kingdom in the Northern Sircars that had a lot of trouble paying its tribute. The British invaded it repeatedly to exact tribute, and interfered several times in the royal succession.” Op. cit., Felix Padel, 37.

¹³⁴ A. Duff, “Goomsur; the late war there – the Khonds or Hill tribes,” *Calcutta Review* 6 (1846, Jan.–Mar.), 1–85. Cr., Felix Padel, 39.

¹³⁵ Op. cit., Felix Padel, 40.

¹³⁶ Op. cit., Major General John Campbell, C. B. 33; Cf. Jan N. Bremmer, ed. *The Strange World of Human Sacrifice* (Paris: Peeters, 2007), 195.

¹³⁷ Op. cit., Felix Padel, 44.

dead to recover the royal 'treasure', muskets and regimental emblems which were lost to the Konds. The Konds were seen as essentially lawless. They insisted that the Konds were in need of British peace and justice.¹³⁸

The Ghumsur war is purely a political one. The British wanted to overpower the Kond kingdom and get the revenue from them. The Kond king was considered as a Hindu king by the British, though the Konds had nothing to do with the Hindu religion. When the King refused to pay the revenue, the British used maximum army force at their disposal to suppress and destroy the Konds. The remnants were inhumanly treated as slaves. The British considered the Konds as uncivilised and lawless, so they imposed their laws in the name of civilisation.¹³⁹

2.6.2 Suppressing human sacrifice

During the Ghumsur war, the British officials gathered reports about human sacrifices in the Kond hills. In 1837, the Madras British government appointed Campbell as in charge of Kond affairs to suppress the human sacrifices peacefully.¹⁴⁰

Meanwhile, the custom had also been reported to Bengal government because some of the Kond hill areas fall under the jurisdiction of the Bengal government. The matter was reported in newspapers both in Britain and in India. The officials travelled around the hill region along with the soldiers and rescued hundreds of *Meriahs*. They made a treaty with the Kond village chiefs to stop the practice of human sacrifices. The British tried to subdue the whole Kond hills, but it was a great challenge for them. Many local rulers refused to be under British rule. The British struggled for a long period from 1836 to 1861 to subdue the Konds. Finally, the *Meriah* Agency was abolished on 18 December 1861, and the Kond districts, duly pacified, came under regular civil and police authority of the British.¹⁴¹

In trying to abolish the *Meriah* sacrifice, the British made themselves a political enemy to the Konds. As such, even after the *Meriah* sacrifice was abolished, the Konds continued to offer buffalos in their sacrifices. For Max Weber, the person's worldview calculates the effect of having other people in it. The Konds' worldview and religious

¹³⁸ A. Duff, "The first series of Government measures for the abolition of human scarifies among the Khonds," *Calcutta Review* 6 (Jul.–Sep.1846), 46.

¹³⁹ Op. cit., Felix Padel, 54.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 64.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 106.

beliefs in relation to God–*Meriah*–Rain are very much connected to their present life. The Konds believed that if they failed to perform *Meriah* sacrifice, they would not get fortune and rain as God’s blessing. In 1866, when chickenpox broke out wherein many died in Kandhamal, a group of Christian Konds returned to their original religion, alleging that the new faith could not save them. For the Konds, Christianity is considered as ‘outsider’. So, they refused to accept Christianity from the beginning and treated them as rivals, including the Christian Panas.¹⁴²

2.7 Missionary activities in Kandhamal

At the beginning of nineteenth century, missionaries of various denominations worked in the Odisha region. The Particular Baptists, the General Baptists, the American Freewill Baptists, the Evangelical Missionary Society and the Roman Catholics had their stations in Odisha.¹⁴³

2.7.1 The mission of the Reformed Churches and its growth

William Brown, a missionary, made an extensive tour of the Kandhamal hills in 1837 and was convinced that the Baptist missionaries could establish a centre in Kandhamal. In 1845, Amos Sutton (1802–1854), a Baptist missionary, proposed to start mission work among the Konds because the *Meriahs* would help the missionaries to preach the gospel to the Konds. But it was only in June 1862, at the Annual Meeting of the General Baptist Missionary Society (GBMS), that a proposal was made to place two missionaries at Russelkonda. The missionaries at Russelkonda would then proceed to preach in the Kond hills.¹⁴⁴ The rescued *Meriahs* were entrusted to the missionaries. They brought almost all the *Meriahs* to the fold of Christianity. They educated them and arranged marriages for them. After marriages, the *Meriahs* were settled in the Christian villages.¹⁴⁵

John Orissa Goadby (1808–1868) was appointed to Russelkonda by the GBMS. He had his first visit to the Kond hills in the cold season of 1862–63 and subsequently visited three more times in 1864–65 to explore the possible gateways into the hills. There was a terrible famine throughout Odisha in 1866 which forced Goadby to shift

¹⁴² Ibid., 108.

¹⁴³ Op. cit., Dasarathi Swaro, 1.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 137.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 135.

his residence to the plains. He died in 1868 at Cuttack after having done two years of strenuous relief work.¹⁴⁶

Until William Hill visited the hills in 1873, the missionary work among the Konds remained suspended. Then in 1889, an un-denominational committee was formed to support three men of Cliff College, Derbyshire, namely, Abiathar Wilkinson, Arthur Long and Tom Wood who visited in 1890 and spent the cold season in the hills. Tom Wood died of malaria within a few months of his arrival. Wilkinson and Long continued to tour the hills from their base on the plains. Wilkinson completed the translation of the Gospel of Mark into Kui in 1893. In the same year, both the missionaries were adopted by the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS). In 1897, Wilkinson died of smallpox. Long served in various parts of Odisha particularly the Kond hills. He later died of black water fever in 1909.¹⁴⁷

John Biswas, an Oriya man, was inspired by Long. He had a passion to work among the Konds and never gave up. He was first stationed as an evangelist at Russelkonda. No one was willing to accompany him to the hills for a long time due to the prevailing deadly fevers until a schoolmaster followed him. While staying in the Kond hills in the month of May in 1910, the schoolmaster was down with a fever while returning to Russelkonda. He could only join the school in the month of October. Following John Biswas, other missionaries joined to work in the Kond hills, and they built an accommodation for missionaries at Udayagiri in 1910.¹⁴⁸

In 1914, on the day of Easter Sunday, the first converts were baptised by O. J. Millman, a missionary. Bisi, his wife Lasuri, their son Bondia and their brother-in-law Kusu were the first family members to receive baptism. By 1920, there were 30 baptised Church members who regularly gathered at John Biswas' bungalow in Udayagiri. The foundations of the first church building in the Mallikapori group of villages were laid on Kumbarikupa hill.¹⁴⁹

By 1930, there were over 400 baptised members who worshipped in 16 centres. The church began to grow spontaneously, mostly among the Panas. Students brought their parents and the relatives of other converts also joined the church. Many new areas

¹⁴⁶ Op. cit., Barbara M. Boal, *The Church in the Kond Hills*, 58.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 59.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 60.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 61.

were opened for evangelism. In 1931, more than 1500 people gathered for a three-day conference at Mallikapori. All churches united under the name of the Kond Hill Christian Church Union in the same year. In 1936, there were 18 churches; 9 worship groups were without church buildings in the Kond hills. The number of churches had increased to 30 by 1940.¹⁵⁰

In March 1950, a church union was formed and a constitution was accepted by the 49 Baptist churches in the annual meeting. In 1955, there were 63 churches in the union. In 1956, the United Christian Missionary Society (American Disciples of Christ) came forward to support the Baptist work in several areas of Orissa. The office of the Union Secretary was occupied by a *Kui*-speaking Pana Christian from the beginning. Until 1956, the Protestant Church largely grew among *Kui*-speaking Panas.¹⁵¹

In June 1956, Dr Donald McGavran, a missionary of the United Christian Missionary Society, produced a useful and impartial appraisal of the life and work of the church in the Kond hills. His practical suggestions for faster church growth among the Konds were of great constructive value. According to his suggestion, a selected team of Kond Christians were sent out with the mandate to disciple as many Konds as possible. That became a movement among the Konds. By 1961, there were 50 new churches established among the Konds in and around G. Udayagiri.¹⁵²

Since 1970, all the Baptist Churches of British origin in Odisha including the churches in Kandhamal District became part of the Church of North India and came under the diocese of Cuttack for administrative and pastoral care. When the Cuttack diocese was constituted in 1970, there were 431 churches. In 1972, the Cuttack diocese bifurcated and formed the Sambalpur diocese taking 200 churches from the Cuttack diocese. The church was growing constantly. There was a leadership crisis; the church invited the young men and women to commit for full-time ministry. By 1985, there were 18 pastors who hold theological degrees and at least 40 theological schools trained village pastors in Kandhamal District. Further, the Cuttack diocese bifurcated and formed the Phulbani diocese on 29 April 1997 which covered four districts including the whole Kandhamal region with 562 rural churches.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 63.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 64.

¹⁵² Ibid., 66.

¹⁵³ Report of the Diocese of Phulbani 2013–2015. Presented in the Diocesan Council 2015.

2.7.2 The mission of the Roman Catholic Church and its growth

The Congregation of the Missionaries of St. Francis De Sales (MSFS) from Savoy, France sent out its first six pioneer missionaries to India in 1845. Four priests and two brothers arrived on 8 September 1845 at Pondicherry, India, and from there, they reached Visakhapatnam on 19 February 1846 which was part of the Madras Vicariate till 1850. Visakhapatnam became a full-fledged Apostolic Vicariate in 1850. Msgr. Theophilus Sebastian Neyeret was the Vicar Apostolic who visited Odisha in September 1850. There were small groups of Catholics, mostly of British and Portuguese origin and also migrant Indian workers living in Berhampur, Gopalpur, Aska, Ganjam, Russelkonda and Cuttack. Bishop Neyeret visited all places and met the Catholic communities and returned to Visakhapatnam convinced of the need of sending priests to these Catholics. Bishop Neyeret sent two missionaries, namely, Fr. J. M. Tissot and Fr. Francis Sermet to the Ganjam Division on an expedition. Both of them became seriously ill, as a result of which Fr. Francis Sermet died 10 days after the expedition.¹⁵⁴

In 1853, two other missionaries, Fr. Jean-Marie Dupont¹⁵⁵ and Fr. Philippe Richard-Cugnet,¹⁵⁶ were part of the Visakhapatnam mission, who entered into the Kond hills. The abject poverty of the Konds and Panas attracted the attention of the missionaries. The village they entered was called Mathakhala situated on the outskirts of Surada. They preferred a place by the riverside to build a hut and built it by imitating the Konds who lived around them. They stayed there for three months and baptised 213 Konds. However, they could not stay there because of the raising river in the monsoon. They established their headquarters at Surada on the plains.¹⁵⁷ They were back again in the same place to continue their mission among the Panas. In 1854, after six months of hard work, 184 Panas were baptised. Since the Panas responded to the gospel in large

¹⁵⁴ Anselm Francis Biswal, "MSFS French Missionaries in Odisha & Genesis of the Diocese of Cuttack (1850–1922)," *Platinum Jubilee of Cuttack Diocese (1937–2012)*, p. 82.

¹⁵⁵ "Jean Marie Dupont was born on 25 June 1816, at Thones, Savoy. He joined the Visakhapatnam mission, South India in 1847. He spent his lifetime in different mission stations particularly at Surada (1865–1887). He died on 17 June 1887, at Surada." M. Domenge, *La Mission de Vizagapatnam*, translated by Jesuraj Rayappan, 363–364.

¹⁵⁶ "Fr. Philippe Richard-Cugnet was born on 22 October 1824, at Serraval, Savoy. He was ordained on 5 April 1851. He joined the Visakhapatnam mission in the same year. He was a pioneer at Surada. He died on 12 April 1880 at Visakhapatnam." *Tableau General, In Histoire de la Mission*, translated by Jesuraj Rayappan, 44.

¹⁵⁷ *Op. cit.*, M. Domenge, *La Mission de...*, 364.

numbers, the missionaries learned Oria and adopted their culture. In 1855, there were 600 Catholics in Surada. It became the mission centre of Northern Odisha.¹⁵⁸

When Fr. Antoine Guillermin,¹⁵⁹ Fr. Joseph Seigneur¹⁶⁰ and Br. Jean Pierre Piccot¹⁶¹ joined with Fr. Philippe Richard in 1854, they once again extended their mission among the Konds. The missionaries desired to adopt the customs of the local people in order to make them understand that they were genuinely concerned about them. So, they learnt *Kui*, the language of the Konds and had a better relationship with the people.¹⁶² By 1860, the mission at Koussipanga had grown to 360 Christians and had a chapel. They extended their work to Arigadi. While the disposition of the Konds was not encouraging because of their poor response, the enthusiasm of the Panas was more edifying. The Panas readily responded to the gospel though they were considered as a low caste group, they associated with others in the work place. By nature they easily mingled with other people. There was no hesitation for them to accept the European missionaries and their religion. The Panas did not have any bitter experience with the Europeans, so they wanted to be with the Europeans in order to enjoy the benefits of the Europeans. The Konds were not ready to accept the Europeans because they had a bitter experience with the British army, so they were not ready to welcome the European missionaries. The Konds did not differentiate between the British officials and the European missionaries. The Konds were not initially receptive to Christianity, and only a few became Christians. However, subsequently, they accepted Christianity in large numbers.¹⁶³

In 1860, the growth of the Catholic mission suddenly came to a standstill. The Dalit Christians of Mathakhala were under the threat of social exclusion imposed on them by

¹⁵⁸ Msgr. Neyret, *La Mission de Vizagapatnam, Extrait du Registre Officiel*, translated by Fr. Jesuraj Rayappan, 1845, ASMFS 8.

¹⁵⁹ "Antoine Guillermin was born on 5 April 1822, at Poisy, Savoy. He came to the Visakhapatnam mission in 1853. He spent most of his life on the Kond hills with 'semi-savage' people. He was a pioneer missionary at Ganjam, Koussipanga and Surada. He was instrumental in building the churches at Surada, Berhampur and many other places. He founded the orphanage at Thotavally. He died at Surada on 8 December 1869." Cf. Op. cit., M. Domenge, *La Mission de...*, 347.

¹⁶⁰ "Joseph Seigneur was born at Megeve, Savoy, in 1827. He was ordained in 1852. He joined the Visakhapatnam mission in 1853. He learned Sanskrit and studied Hindu scriptures. He died on 3 May 1861." Cf. Op. cit., M. Domenge, *La Mission de...*, 252.

¹⁶¹ "Jean Pierre Piccot was born at Luillin, Savoy. He came to the Visakhapatnam mission in 1853. He worked in Koussipanga and other stations in Orissa. He was a carpenter, and his help in the construction of churches in the mission was much sought after. He died on 3 December 1871, at Aska." Cf. JesurajRayappan, *Trends in the History of the Catholic Church in Orissa: 1850–1922* (Rome: Pontificiae Universitatis Gregorianae, 2003), 22.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 30.

their village chief at Surada, who defected from the Christian faith. All, except for five families, had gone back to their old faith. Similarly, the entire Konds of Kushipanka village gave up their new faith at the outbreak of smallpox epidemic which took a heavy toll of lives among the Konds. During this time, in 1866, Odisha was struck by famine, killing thousands of people. The hill region was one of the worst affected regions and thousands of children became orphans. Fr. Dupont and Fr. Gillermine rescued hundreds of dying children and put them in temporary shelters at Surada.¹⁶⁴

Towards the end of 1866, two sisters of St. Joseph of Annecy came from Visakhapatnam to help the missionaries. The missionaries provided primary education to all the orphans and destitute children. Five missionaries died between 1869 and 1875. But the decade of 1880–1890 witnessed a number of encouraging results in missionary activities. The old Christians of Mathakhala, Surada and Kushipanka were revived. About 200 Konds became Christians in Thotavali village. In 1883, Fr. J. M. Dupont evangelised as many as 200 Dalits in Katingia and Salimagocha villages. He established a primary school and a healthcare centre at Katingia. He died at Surada in 1887.¹⁶⁵

Fr. J. M. Descombes continued the work of Fr. Dupont in the Katingia region. He extended the mission work in some new areas which included Didrobadi, Deegiand Raika, in the heart of the Kond hills. In 1906, he built a residential house for the Kond children. He also set up a catechists' training centre at Surada to meet the needs of both the Kui and the Oriya communities and published a catechism, prayer books and hymn books in Oriya. Five other missionaries died between the years 1898 and 1907. In 1914, the First World War broke out, and four missionaries from Ganjam mission were called back to France to serve as military chaplains.¹⁶⁶

In 1918, another fatal cholera epidemic swept through the Surada region killing 52 of the children in the orphanages. During the period from 1918 to 1921, three more missionaries died. In the year 1920, the French missionaries in Odisha decided to bid farewell to the mission in Odisha. On 3 February 1922, the MSFS missionaries handed over Odisha mission to the congregation of the mission of St. Vincent De Paul with

¹⁶⁴ Anselm Francis Biswal, "MSFS French Missionaries in Odisha & Genesis of the Diocese of Cuttack (1850–1922)," *Platinum Jubilee of Cuttack Diocese (1937–2012)*, 83.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 83.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 84.

4200 Catholics, 2500 catechumens, 8 primary schools, 2 orphanages, 1000 acres of paddy field and 2 churches.¹⁶⁷

In January 1922, a team of Spanish missionaries of St. Vincent De Paul known as the Vincentians reached Berhampur and Surada. Bishop W. Pierre Rossillon, MSFS of the Vishakhapatnam diocese, came to the mission headquarters in Surada and officially handed over the mission to Fr. Jose M. Fernandez, who was the leader of Spanish missionaries, on 3 February 1922. They expanded their mission in the interior places. From January 1922 to April 1953, 49 Vincentian fathers and 8 brothers from Spain came and worked in this region. In 1937, the Cuttack mission was elevated to a diocese, and in 1938, Rt. Rev. Msgr. Florencio Sanz C. M. was appointed the first Bishop of Cuttack diocese. In 1974, Berhampur diocese bifurcated from Cuttack which included the Kandhamal region.¹⁶⁸

The Catholic population kept on increasing, and when the diocese of Cuttack was bifurcated in 1974, the Catholic population had reached 90,000, with 40 Diocesan priests, 31 established parishes, 13 convents and about 200 catechists. There were 95 primary schools, 5 middle schools, 4 high schools, 13 health centre and 12 hostels for boys and girls spread out in the undivided diocese of Cuttack.¹⁶⁹ In 2012, there were 21 parishes, 338 village churches and 54,733 Catholics in Kandhamal District.¹⁷⁰ The majority of the Catholics were Oriya-speaking Panas because most of their works were in the Oriya language.¹⁷¹

2.8 Impact of Christianity on the people of Kandhamal

When the western missionaries brought Christianity into the Kond hills, changes took place in the lifestyle of the new converts. They began to either leave or modify their socio-cultural practices based on their new belief. The people who remained in their old beliefs were disturbed by the new religion. Some of the changed customs and practices are described below.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 85.

¹⁶⁸ Basil Thottamkara, "Vincentians and Cuttack Mission," *Platinum Jubilee of Cuttack Diocese (1937–2012)*, 96.

¹⁶⁹ *Platinum Jubilee of Cuttack Diocese (1937–2012)*, 105.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 120.

¹⁷¹ Victor E. W. Hayward, *The Church as Christian Community: Three Studies of North Indian Churches* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1966), 273.

2.8.1 Concerning birth

One-month separation after childbirth was the custom governing the ‘unclean’ of the people of the Kond hills. During this time, the mother was not supposed to come into the front street or to enter into community life, or cook for her family. At the end of the period, all the old cooking vessels, mainly pots, were thrown out and replaced with new ones. But among a few Christian families, the period of separation got reduced, except for the elements that were used for physical well-being, and others were rejected. Many Christians practised this custom through fear of social ostracism.¹⁷²

2.8.2 Concerning marriage

For the Konds, marriage had always been considered as a relationship between two extended families, not as much of personal relationship as with the social ties that marriage brings about. But the church leaders emphasised the religious significance of the marriage and introduced ‘registered marriage’, which made divorce virtually impossible. The traditional understanding of marriage was found in expressions commonly used such as ‘he has taken a wife’ and ‘she has gone to a husband’. This announcing ‘taking’ or ‘going’ avoided the heavy expenses of wedding feasts. In the Kui marriage, drinking alcohol formed part of the marriage ceremony, but Christians refused to supply alcohol. The non-Christian relatives did not appreciate this. Such an act was considered as a public breach of hospitality. However, certain traditional practices continued to influence Christian marriages.¹⁷³

2.8.3 Concerning death

The celebration during a funeral ceremony was an important social event for the Kui community. It took three days and nights, with continuous drumming and wake-keeping until the third afternoon. There were bursts of wailed lamentations from all the women present. These wailings followed a general pattern that expressed the deep sense of loss. Sometimes it contained evil words and phrases. Men were expected to either drink alcohol or bring money for the drinks. The customs and practices of death were related

¹⁷² “The fear and taboo of the people is that if someone breaks the custom and touches the well of drinking water, the spirits from the cremation ground will seize the people who were associated with the unclean person.” Cf. Op. cit., Barbara M. Boal, *The Church in the Kond Hills*, 116.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 117–120.

not only to the living but also to the spirit world. Many of these practices were directly linked to their traditional religious belief.¹⁷⁴

Christians had dissociated themselves from the drummed wake-keeping and the association of the spider-hunt.¹⁷⁵ However, they continued to join their fellow villagers during the time of death by contributing their share of wood and helping in all other possible ways. Christians did not pay for drinks and feasting. These attitudes and practices of Christians were interpreted as non-participation by the villagers and created tensions between them.¹⁷⁶

2.9 The challenges to the Christian mission in the Kond hills

There were a number of reasons that caused an anti-Christian impression among the people of the Konds. The concern Christian missionaries showed for the people and their families raised suspicion in the population and caused rumours. The people conceived that once the missionaries had learnt their language and had become familiarised to their way of living, they might abduct and send some of them to Europe, where they would be sold into slavery or be pushed into prostitution.¹⁷⁷ Because of this propaganda, people were hesitant to accept Christianity.

A point of disputation was the conducting of final ceremonies after death; the local tradition was cremation, but the missionaries introduced the burial of the dead. Unfortunately, dreadful incidents vitiated this practice in the beginnings. When the family of the deceased agreed to bury, there was an opposition from the village. In some places, wild animals devoured the body by digging the grave which created anger against the missionaries. Before Hindu fundamentalists enter Kandhamal, the people of

¹⁷⁴ “The reference to drink or the money spent for it is that men who mourn must take in money or rice. The amount of money or drink is based on the closeness of the relationship. These amounts are usually spent once on toddy.” Ibid., 122.

¹⁷⁵ “Of religious significance is the ritual search made on the third day at the cremation ground, continuing until the spider, into which the spirit of the deceased is believed to have passed, is found and carried home on a winnowing tray for rehabilitation. Without this, the deceased would wander as a dispossessed spirit liable to bring disaster to the relatives.” Ibid., 121.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 123.

¹⁷⁷ “At that time, there was a trade of coolies – very similar to the slave trade – a suspicion of ‘white men’ as secret agents was in circulation among the people of the Kond hills. It might have been a weapon used by the Brahmins in order to arrest the spread of a new religion.” Jesuraj Rayappan, *Trends in the History of the Catholic Church in Orissa: 1850–1922* (Rome: Pontificiae Universitatis Gregorianae, 2003), 23.

Kandhamal tried their level best to stop conversion by opposing the missionaries as well as acclaiming the values of their own customs.¹⁷⁸

The new religious moral values of Christianity changed the socio-economic and cultural lifestyle of the Christian converts in Kandhamal. According to Max Weber's 'Social Action Theory', human action is driven by meaning and motives.¹⁷⁹ Action can only be understood by appreciating the worldview held by the social actors. When the people of Kandhamal became Christians, they accepted the Christian worldview along with the new understanding of God. They adopted the new values of the new religion. Though they remained in the same village with their own people, they refused to adhere to certain old customs and traditions, which sometimes led to unpleasant situations. The new religion brought division within the community. The people who accepted the new religion began to worship in separate places. Big churches were built, and a new pattern of worship was introduced. A new community emerged with a new identity within the community. This social change brought new challenges to the community life. The new identity as Christians was not only identified with the European missionaries but also considered as a threat to the local community which continued to follow the social and religious norms of the land. Thus, the Christians were identified as 'others' within the community.¹⁸⁰

In spite of all these challenges the Christian missionaries helped the new converts to abandon the customs and practices which were inhuman. In the case of the Konds, the missionaries brought changes mainly by abolishing the practice of human sacrifice (*Meria*), alcoholism, and change in traditional burial system and child birth ceremony. But these changes were criticised by the people of other faiths. They said that giving up the customs and practices would lead to a loss of one's identity.

2.10 Conclusion

While Christian mission activities brought health, education, relief and justice into the lives of the people, it had on the whole been well received. But one of the most troubling features in respect of Christian mission was the feeling of that was experienced by those to whom the message was brought. People of other faiths did not understand the Christian mission as an activity that focused on healing and fullness of life, but as one

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 29.

¹⁷⁹ Op. cit., Barbara M. Boal, *The Church in the Kond Hills*, 88.

¹⁸⁰ Anuja Mohan Pradhan, "Religious Conversion in Kandhal District", Jan. 2015. p. 100.

that initiates a rival society, which was claimed to be superior and which was not accessible elsewhere. Thus people of other faiths identified the motive of Christian mission as the extension of the Church and the extinction of other faiths.

In evaluating the Christian mission activities developed by the Roman Catholic Church as well as the Protestant Church in Kandhamal, one may conclude that the aim and objectives of the mission activities was the creation of a religion within the community that meant the breaking up of the existing community. Hence the Christian mission activities have been understood and looked upon as a cause of disruption.

Christian missionaries and the colonizers brought many changes in the Indian society with both positive as well as negative influence. The Christian mission societies were well established in India by the end of the 19th century when it gained converts through mass movements among the lower caste people. The Europeans introduced many changes and new things in India with progress and improvement in social, religious and other aspects of life, such as trade and commerce, printing press, educational institutions and communication. At the same time there were some misconceptions in their mission.

It is evident that Christian mission activities and colonialism went hand in hand in spite of certain misunderstandings between them. Colonialism as a mechanism paved the way for Christian mission activities and at the same time helped them to establish power. It is difficult to establish whether the association of colonialism in the mission work was a positive or a negative. On the one hand, colonialism helped the Christian mission activities and granted material and moral support; on the other hand, because of their collaboration with the colonial authority, the Christian missions generated many allegations and instilled negative attitudes towards the Christian mission from many local people.

Western colonialism attempted to subjugate the people of its colonies in the dominion of culture and ideology. It represented a distinctive constellation of complex and interrelated practices which established Western hegemony not only politically, militarily and economically but also culturally and ideologically. Post-colonialism represents an attempt to investigate the complex and deeply loaded dynamics of

Western colonialism.¹⁸¹ Based on this theory, the early history of Kandhamal analysed and brought out the following observations.

Kandhamal was a tribal region where the Konds and Panas had been living together for ages. Though the Konds considered the Panas as lower strata of the society, both communities were economically, culturally, politically and religiously interdependent. Kandhamal was not touched by outsiders till the British established their Agency administration in 1830. In 1835, when the British tried to invade Kandhamal, the Ghumsur wars started. By the end of the war in 1836, many Konds were brutally killed, and their belongings were destroyed by the British army. The British subjugated the Konds and treated them as slaves. This first experience of the Konds with the British created bitterness against the British from the very beginning. The British intervention in the religious and cultural beliefs and practices of the Konds and suppression of their age-old practice of *Meriah* created further aversion against the British.

It was in this situation that the Christian missionaries started their strategy for mission work in Kandhamal in 1837. The European missionaries were identified with the British colonialists by the Konds. Because of their bitter experiences with the British army, they refused to accept anything from the Europeans including their religion, Christianity. The 'divide and rule' policy of the British created a divide between the Konds and Panas. Since the Panas accepted Christianity in large numbers, the Konds began to hate Panas because of their close association with the Europeans whom they considered as enemies.

This bitterness and enmity between the two tribes were further aggravated during the freedom struggle movement. The Hindu nationalistic movement capitalised to unleash violence later in Kandhamal from 1984.

¹⁸¹ Anshuman Prasad, ed. *Postcolonial Theory and Organizational Analysis: A Critical Engagement* (Macmillan: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd., 2003), 5.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ORIGIN OF HINDU NATIONALISM IN INDIA AND ITS IMPACT ON KANDHAMAL, ODISHA

3.1 Introduction

Many Hindu¹⁸² fundamentalist organisations emerged in the context of the freedom movement in India from the early 19th century. The last chapter explained how Christianity as a European religion influenced the life of the people of Kandhamal. Similarly, Christian missionaries worked in all parts of India and converted the local people to Christianity. Like in Kandhamal some communities accepted Christianity others rejected it. There were many reasons for rejection but the major reason was the dominant nature of the European rulers. In this colonial context, the Hindu community leaders started Hindu fundamentalist organisations in order to protect the Hindu religious traditions from the Europeans. Later these organisations joined the Independent movement and emphasised the Hindu nationalist ideology in India.

The Hindu fundamentalist movements are considered the ideological parents of many minor movements in India. Some of the most important movements are the Arya Samaj, Hindu Mahasabha, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Viswa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). This chapter analyses the emergence, growth and ideology of these movements from a historical perspective and how far it has created religious communal tension in India, particularly in Kandhamal, Odisha.

3.2 Background of the enmity between Europeans and caste Hindus

The Portuguese came to the west coast of India and captured Goa from the Sultan of Bijapur in 1515. Goa became the centre of Portuguese administration and was made the capital of all Portuguese settlements in Asia. The Portuguese settlement at Goa was accomplished through violence and strife. Bitter enmity grew between the Portuguese

¹⁸² “Originally the term ‘Hindu’ was used with geographical implications. It was used only to denote the people who lived near the Indus basin, and it was never used for the whole of present India. Initially, the term ‘Hindu’ began with regional identity. It was coined by Arabs and others to denote the people living on the other side of the river Sindhu (Indus). Now, there are two terms – Hindu and Indian, respectively – to denote the religion of a group of people and the nation as a whole.” Gavin D. Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 12; Cf. M.S. Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, 3rd ed., Reprint (Bangalore: Sahitya Sindhu Prakashan, 2000), 54; Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, Centenary Edition (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), 74; Ram Puniyani, *Fascism of the Sangh Parivar* (Delhi: Media House, 2000), 46; S. Robertson, *Freedom of Religion: A Human Rights Issue* (Bangalore: BTESSC/SATHRI, 2007), 80.

and the Mohammedans. Later, when Christianisation was carried out by the Portuguese government, through intermarriages between the Indians and the Portuguese, Indian women were encouraged to get baptised before marriage.¹⁸³ Temples and mosques were destroyed in their territory. Hindus and Muslims were forced to convert to Christianity or leave their territory. Privileges were given to converts.¹⁸⁴ The Portuguese were identified as ‘Franks’ or ‘*Parangis*’ by the caste Hindus, which means meat-eating, wine-drinking, loose-living and arrogant persons. Christianity was identified as *Parangi margam*, which means ‘the way of *Parangis*’.¹⁸⁵ The Christian identity was not accepted by the caste Hindus right from the time Christianity came to India through the Europeans.

On 31 December 1600, a group of English merchants started the East India Company. In 1608, they came to India in for trading; their ships reached first at the port of Surat, on the West coast of India. In 1615, Jahangir, the Mughal Emperor allowed them to establish a factory at Surat. Gradually, the British diminished the Portuguese, and over the years, they expanded their trading centres in all over India. A large number of trading centres were established, and a considerable amount of English communities settled around the three presidency cities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. The Company gradually turned from a trading establishment to the ruling power of the country. After 1757, the Company got the right to collect revenues on behalf of the Mughal Emperor. By the Regulating Act of 1773, the Company directly came under the control of the British parliament, and the parliament brought the Indian Territory under the Governor-General’s rule.¹⁸⁶

In the following five decades, the British worked towards eliminating their rivals and bringing their territories under their control. The conflicts against Tipu Sultan of Mysore and the Marathas brought them major victories, and lastly a series of Anglo-Sikh Wars extended the British power all over India. In 1858, the East India Company was dissolved, and the British Crown took over the administration of India. This use of military power against the local rulers and the imposition of the British rule over the

¹⁸³ Op. cit., C. B. Firth, 50.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 52.

¹⁸⁵ Stephen Neill, *A History of Christianity in India* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 281.

¹⁸⁶ “A Brief History of the East India Company.” <https://learn.culturalindia.net/brief-history-british-east-india-company-essay.html>. Accessed on 30/04/2018.

people created aversion against the British.¹⁸⁷ From 1834, British India was officially open to the missionary work. Different kinds of missions were established in various parts of India by different missionary societies from Europe. Since Christianity was identified with the European colonial power, the caste Hindus began to resist the Christian missionaries and hated them. This situation led to conflict and violence in various occasions in different times and places. The following are the major incidents which created anti-European nationalism.¹⁸⁸

3.2.1 Mutiny of 1806 at Vellore

At Vellore, in South India, the British instructed the local soldiers on duty to wear round caps instead of turbans, remove all caste marks and trim the beards of Muslims. The intension of the British was to bring certain discipline and uniform code, but the Hindu and Muslim soldiers were highly offended. They suspected that the British were trying to convert the local soldiers to Christianity.¹⁸⁹ So on 10 July 1806, the local soldiers stormed into the Vellore Fort, killed and wounded more than 200 British soldiers. It lasted for only one day. The sudden outbreak was suppressed by the British, and around 100 mutineers were executed. This event created further bitterness between the Christian British rulers and the local Hindus.¹⁹⁰

3.2.2 Mutiny and great revolt of 1857

On 10 May 1857, there was an uprising among the soldiers of the Bengal army in Meerut. The immediate reason for the military estrangement was the introduction of the new breech-loading Enfield rifle, the cartridge of which was allegedly greased with pork and beef fat. When Muslim and Hindu troops came to know that the tip of the Enfield cartridge had to be bitten off to prepare it for firing, many of them refused to use cartridges for their religious reasons. For Hindus, the cow was a sacred animal not to be killed. For Muslims, the pig is an abominated animal not even to be touched. The Indian troops were offended by this new cartridge and refused to use it. These

¹⁸⁷ A.J. Farrington, *Trading Places: The East India Company and Asia, 1600–1834* (London: British Library, 2002), 12. Cf. John Keay, *The Honourable Company: A History of the English East India Company* (London: Harper Collins, 1991), 51.

¹⁸⁸ Philip Lawson, *The East India Company: A History* (London: Routledge, 1993), 24. Cf. H.V. Bowen, *The Business of Empire: The East India Company and Imperial Britain, 1756–1833* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 16.

¹⁸⁹ Joshua Marshman, *Advantages of Christianity in Promoting the Establishment and Prosperity of the British Government in India: Containing Remarks Occasioned by Reading the Memoir on the Vellore Mutiny* (Winchester Row: 1813), 4.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

disobedient troops were kept captive, but they were rescued by their comrades. The comrades shot the British officers and proceeded towards Delhi, 65 km distant, where there were only Indian troops. The Indian troops at Delhi joined them. They had recovered the city and the Mughal fort, and declared the aged nominal Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah II, as their leader. This mutiny became a full-scale revolt and spread to Lucknow, Kanpur, Gwalior and Allahabad. The British fought back and suppressed the mutiny by April 1859.¹⁹¹

The common factors that transformed the military mutiny into a popular revolt were political, economic, social and cultural. The British educational policy was a westernising one, with English as the official language. The high-caste elites, schooled in the traditional pattern in Sanskrit, felt affronted. Western inventions such as the telegraph and railways aroused the prejudice of the Indian conservative society. The caste Hindus were offended by the British when they intervened the realm of Hindu customs in the name of humanity – e.g., the prohibition of *sati*, infanticide and the law legalising remarriage of Hindu widows. Moreover, the widespread activity of Christian missionaries created fear among Hindus that the missionary activities would erode their society with the support of the colonial power. These factors created bitterness against Christians in India.¹⁹²

3.3 Hindu fundamentalist movements in India

The word ‘fundamentalism’¹⁹³ has a negative connotation in the present days. However, all fundamentalist movements are not necessarily militant in nature. They are mostly used to describe people’s political stance in terms of their religious convictions and agenda.

According to Frykenberg,

‘Fundamentalism’ can be defined as a distinctively extreme form of militantly religious and radically conservative, even separatist reaction against

¹⁹¹ Mamta Aggarwal, “The First War of Independence,” <http://www.historydiscussion.net/history-of-india/the-revolt-of-1857-the-first-war-of-independence/1581>. Accessed on 30/05/2018.

¹⁹² Mamta Aggarwal, “The Revolt of 1857 – the First War of Independence,” <http://www.historydiscussion.net/history-of-india/the-revolt-of-1857-the-first-war-of-independence/1581>. Accessed on 30/05/2018.

¹⁹³ “By nature fundamentalisms are reactionary, exclusivistic, separatistic, intolerant, oppositional, politically motivated, claiming to be custodians of truth, claiming to be agents of a true community, claimed to be working for the glorious future, claimed to be struggling for eradicating evils from the society through radical changes.” M.T. Cherian, *Hindutva Agenda and Minority Rights; A Christian Response* (Bangalore: Centre for Contemporary Christianity, 2007) 156.

‘modernism’. As such, it is a kind of extreme reaction against changes, both ideological and institutional, that are perceived as threatening ultimate ‘Truth’ (and/or ‘Verity’) and as enshrining ‘Falsehood’, ‘Evil’ and ‘Impurity’. As such, it is extremely *militant* in reaction to anything antithetic to ‘The Truth’ (World View) as manifest within an eternally inerrant ‘Text’.¹⁹⁴

Hindu fundamentalism emerged with the aim of preserving the ‘truth of Hinduism’ and bringing back the glory of the *Vedic* period at any cost.

There is a long history of subjugation of Hindus. They were subjected to the rule of dominating powers. Muslims became a ruling force in North India from the thirteenth century onwards. The advent of the British at the beginning of the seventeenth century was the dawn of another foreign rule. The conversion activities of these two strong religious groups of the foreign rulers posed a threat to the Hindu religion. Mostly, the untouchables, who were the menial workers of the society, converted to Islam or Christianity. The converts refused to continue their menial work. The Hindu society was not prepared to lose the menial workers, and they also thought that the conversion of the untouchables would emerge as a threat in view of their numbers.¹⁹⁵

The dominant ideology of the colonial world and the English language were understood as Christian by the Indians. Moreover, Christian missionaries often claimed and made public statements that all Christian things were superior to Hindu idolatry. So, the elite Hindus began to think of re-examining their own religious values and sought to defend the same.¹⁹⁶ Religious fundamentalism has cultural, political and ethnic implications. In the 1920s, certain Hindu ideologues felt threatened by the mobilisation of Muslims in the Khilafat Movement¹⁹⁷ and started the Hindu

¹⁹⁴ Mark T. B. Laing, ed. *Nationalism and Hindutva: A Christian Response* (Pune: CMS/UBS/ISPCK, 2005), 12.

¹⁹⁵ Kenneth W. Jones, “Politicized Hinduism: The Ideology and Programme of the Hindu Mahasabha,” in Robert Baird, ed. *Religion in Modern India* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1981), 448.

¹⁹⁶ Paul J. Griffiths, *Christianity through Non-Christian Eyes* (New York: Orbis, 1994), 192.

¹⁹⁷ “The Khilafat movement (1919–1924) was an agitation by Indian Muslims allied with Indian nationalist, to pressure the British government to preserve the authority of the Ottoman Sultan as Caliph of Islam after World War I. It was primarily a means of achieving pan-Indian Muslim political mobilization.” Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 1.

nationalistic movement.¹⁹⁸ The primal aim of the movement was to protect the ‘Hindu nation’ against conversion to Islam.

3.4 Emergence of the Nation India – Hindu nationalism

The terms ‘Hindu’ and ‘Indian’ have multiple definitions. In the beginning, these terms were used to describe anything that is native to India, including all people of different castes, tribes and creeds. At the time of independence, the founders of the Indian nation were more inclusive. The term ‘Hinduism’ refers to cultural and political constructions. ‘Hindu’ norms were determined by Brahmanical contributions to virtually every prospect in modern definition. The meanings of these terms were gradually developed by historical events. These events gradually narrowed, reified and communalised the concepts and its meanings. These events led to the reconstruction of the concept, and they transformed the terms to acquire new meanings, thus eliminating the older. Originally, the term ‘Hindu’ was inclusive of all those existed in India, but now, it has become increasingly exclusive, particularly of Muslims and Christians.¹⁹⁹ At the time of independence, Hindu fundamentalism was not as strong as it is today.

The concept of Hindu nationalism is construed upon the purported notion that India is a Hindu nation. The supreme goal of the Hindu fundamentalists is to highlight the all-round glory and greatness of the Hindu nation. The Hindu nationalists were using a strategy of ethno-religious mobilisation to promote primordial claims that an ‘Indian nationhood’ should attract anyone who is generally classified as a Hindu by blood or descent.²⁰⁰

In the colonial context, there was a need for a change of identity from segmental to communal, which cut across caste, sect and religion, in order to compete for political and economic power over different groups.²⁰¹ Originally, “Hinduism was a cluster of distinctive sects and cults, observing common civilization symbols, but with beliefs and

¹⁹⁸ Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics: 1925 to the 1990s* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1996), 11.

¹⁹⁹ Gunther Sontheimer and Kulke Hermann, eds. *Hinduism Reconsidered* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1989), 2.

²⁰⁰ Op. cit., Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist...*, 13; Cf. Peggy Froerer, “Emphasizing ‘Others’: the emergence of Hindu nationalism in a central Indian tribal community,” *Royal Anthropological Institute*, 2006, 40.

²⁰¹ Romila Thapar, “Historical realities,” in Ramjilal, ed. *Communal Problems in India – A Symposium*, Gwalior: 1988. 82.

rituals ranging from atheism to animism and a variety of religious groups identifying themselves by their location, language, and caste”.²⁰²

According to Frykenberg, “The integrative institutions and processes represented by the term ‘Hindu’ and ‘India’ first began to take shape during the early years of the East India Company’s rule, between 1770 and 1820,”²⁰³ There were three parallel processes developed under the British rule. These were institutional, ideological and socio-political. The missionaries who became expert in Orientals added intellectual and philosophical respectability by translating and publishing Indian literature. Many of those were not Hindu in nature, but the missionaries published them in the name of Hindu scriptures. Different religious groups of India such as the Saivites, Vaishnavites and Lingayats began to own scriptures in the same way Christians and Islam do. The Orientals labelled all local scriptures as Hindu scriptures without considering their different sectarian backgrounds.²⁰⁴ The conversion activities of the Christian and Islamic missionaries in the subcontinent provoked the local religious people to think in terms of a consolidated religious framework. In defence and to give the proselytising nature to the Hinduism, gradually the Hindu fundamentalists changed the nature of ‘Hinduism’ and made it a religion of the subcontinent.²⁰⁵

Modern Hinduism is shaped by Orientals and the work of Christian missionaries of the eighteenth century. The British Indian government documented in 1810 all things indigenous to India as Hindu,²⁰⁶ which appeared to give a wide range of meanings to the word ‘Hindu’.²⁰⁷

²⁰² Op. cit., M.T. Cherian, 159.

²⁰³ Robert Erick Frykenberg, “Hindu Fundamentalism and the Structural Stability of India,” in Martin E. Marty and Scott Appleby, eds. *Fundamentalisms and the State Remaking Politics, Economies and Militance* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1993), 238; Robert Erick Frykenberg, “Hindutva as a political religion: an historical perspective,” in R. Griffin et al. eds. *The Sacred in Twentieth Century Politics* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 178.

²⁰⁴ Peter van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus Muslims in India* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 53; Cf. Richard King, “Orientalism and the modern myth of Hinduism,” *Numen*, Vol. 46. No. 2, 1999, 151.

²⁰⁵ Verinder Grover, ed. *Lala Lajpat Rai* (New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications, 1993), 273.

²⁰⁶ “The rule, then becoming the first ‘universal’ or ‘All-India’ state ever to hold away over the entire subcontinent, decided that all religious institutions, endowments, and properties, including all maintenance and ceremonial functions, should be brought under the care, protection, and purview of the state. Therefore, during the nineteenth century and down to our day, the state administered and maintained all ‘Hindu’ (or ‘native’) religious endowments and charitable institutions – ‘*pukka*’ (Major)temples and temple events, ‘monastic’ academies (*matths*), pilgrimages sites, sacred places, ceremonies, festivals and much more.” Op. cit., Robert Erick Frykenberg, “Hindu Fundamentalism...,” 238.

²⁰⁷ Op. cit., M.T. Cherian, 160.

In 1810, the British East India Company officially took direct responsibility for the protection, maintenance and support of all prominent religious and charitable institutions. It became the guardian of all 'Hindu' temples, places of pilgrimage, endowments, ashrams, ceremonies and festivals. This officially sponsored 'Hinduisation' of cultural and religious institutions eventually came to be known as 'official Hinduism' which helped the fundamentalists to develop the concept of 'Hindu nation'.²⁰⁸ Thus, the British Indian government contributed to the establishment of Hinduism as a formal religion during the colonial period.

The arrival of Islam and Christianity created new religious community identities such as Muslims and Christians, which instigated the locals to think about their own identity. Meanwhile, in the All India Census of 1871, the British government in India depicted all people who were not Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Janis, Jews, Parsees and Sikhs, as Hindus. A vague, however collective, identity was given to all Aryan and non-Aryan religious communities of Indian origin.²⁰⁹

The terms 'Hindu' or 'Hinduism' for the British were only labels to describe the adherents of different streams of beliefs and worships practised in the subcontinent. The British failed to recognise the different smaller communities which had their own traditions and identities. The colonial government formally defined the major socio-religious community in terms of the broad traditions that they understood as religious from their western perspective: Hindu, Muslim and Sikh.²¹⁰ The dominant religious community began to feel the need for maintaining their dominance by evolving as a majority community which became possible when the British government named a large number of communities as Hindu. Thus, all the indigenous groups of the subcontinent became Hindu.²¹¹

Another factor for the emergence of Hindu fundamentalism was separate electorates. In 1909, the British government introduced democracy and assured representation of all religions based on the census data. The political power of the different religious communities was based on their number.²¹² The number played a

²⁰⁸ Op. cit., Mark T. B. Laing, 7.

²⁰⁹ Op. cit., Robert Erick Fryckenberg, "Hindu Fundamentalism...", 239.

²¹⁰ G. R. Thursby, *Hindu Muslim Relations in British India: A Study of Controversy, Conflict and Communal Movements in Northern India 1923-1928* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), 175.

²¹¹ Op. cit., M.T. Cherian, 162.

²¹² Daniel Gold, "Organized Hinduism: from Vedic truth to Hindu nation," in Martin E. Marty and Scott Appleby, eds. *Fundamentalism Observe* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991), 537.

very important role in the political game. The attitude of the British government towards different communities also contributed to the Hindu fundamentalism. The introduction of the quota system in the military and civilian employment of different communities was hazardous to communal harmony. The government would listen to the majority voice. So, the dominant religious communities polarised all local religious groups under Hinduism and led to the opposition to the conversion activities. The process eventually took the fierce form of Hindu fundamentalist movements.²¹³

The 'Hindu nation' concept was also processed by the revivalist and extremist of the natives. There was a strong resistance from *bhakti* (spiritual) revivalism in reaction to aggressive Muslim movements like *Sufi* and Christian activities. They found that these forces were attacking the local Hindu customs and traditions. They realised that their own birthrights and native land were in danger and threatened. In defence of the 'old order', activists organised voluntary associations, initiated petition drives, launched a public protest and sometimes instigated riots. They mobilised sources of political power. They created a new kind of grass-roots 'Hindu' consciousness which had never existed before.²¹⁴

These revivalists came from the caste Hindus who were served as officials of the Empire. They mobilised reactive movements and took rigorous action against anything that disturbed local sensibilities or traditions. They were particularly against the government for distracting the caste system, which was perceived to promote conscience of purity and pollution among people groups according to their birth. This kind of catalytic reactions became organisations and developed a strong ideology of 'Hindu nationalism'. The founders of all these organisations belonged to a higher caste, and they developed their ideology based on Brahmanism.²¹⁵

3.4.1 Arya Samaj (Aryan Society)

The British had taken over Punjab by 1849. The leaders of Punjab realised that the British disregarded the Indian culture and education. They were against the educated Bengali Brahmo Samajists²¹⁶ who tried to reform the society in line with British

²¹³ Op. cit., M.T. Cherian, 163.

²¹⁴ Op. cit., Mark T. B. Laing, 10.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 11.

²¹⁶ "The phrase 'Brahmo Samaj' literally means the society of the worshippers of the One True God. It represented a body of men who established the worship of the Supreme Being in spirit as opposed to the idolatry of the land of India. This movement was started by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, in 1828." Sibnath Sastri, *History of the Brahmo Samaj* (Calcutta: Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, 1974), 14.

criticism of idolatry and other superstitious beliefs. They also confronted the increasing conversion activities of Christian and Muslim missionaries in India, especially in Punjab. The modernists or the then reformers praised Jesus and Muhammad and adopted western culture.²¹⁷ These developments were perceived as a threat to the Hindu identity by Swamy Dayananda Saraswati (1824–1883), one of the champions of Hindu renaissance. Swamy Dayananda started Arya Samaj on 10 April 1875 at Mumbai.²¹⁸ It was the first modern Hindu missionary movement of national and international repute grew into a strong regenerative and revolutionary movement. The Hindus in Punjab, as a community, were greatly besieged by the imposing and active presence of the majority of Muslims. On the other hand, the emergence and growth of several reforms and revivalist movements within Sikhism endeavoured to restore the purity of Sikh faith and practice.²¹⁹ The extension of Christian missionary work in Punjab and the ongoing work of Muslims made the minority Hindus to feel more insecure. In this context, Arya Samaj was formed with the aims of eradicating the caste system, idol worship, and superstitions and re-establishing the original Hinduism of the Vedic period.²²⁰ His strategy included aggressive antagonism towards Islam, Christianity and western culture.²²¹

3.4.1.1 Ideology and function of Arya Samaj

The aim of Arya Samaj was to form a new national identity on the basis of fundamental Vedic thoughts and lifestyle. Swamy Dayananda Saraswati claimed that the religion of the Vedas was the only absolute true religion, while other religions contained some truth. Only the Arya Samajists understood and saved the true tradition of India from the profound threats.²²²

²¹⁷ Op. cit., Christophe Jaffrelot, 15; Cf. Kenneth W. Jones, *Arya Dharm: Hindu Consciousness in the 19th Century Punjab* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 15.

²¹⁸ D. S. Sarma, *Studies in the Renaissance of Hinduism in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Benares: Benares Hindu University, 1944), 172.

²¹⁹ Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikh, 1839–2004*, Vol. 2, 2nd ed. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), 125.

²²⁰ “The Vedic period refers to the period between 1500 and 500 BCE in Indian history. The *Vedas* (Hindu scriptures) were written during this period. It also referred to the Vedic civilization.” K. C. Singhal and Roshan Gupta, *The Ancient History of India: Vedic Period, A New Interpretation* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publisher and Distributors, 2003), 1.

²²¹ Aleyamma Zacharia, *Modern Religious and Secular India* (Bangalore: TBT, 1998), 65.

²²² J. E. Llewellyn, *Arya Samaj as a Fundamentalist Movement: A Study in Comparative Fundamentalism* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1993), 87.

Dayananda's doctrine of cow protection and the ban on cow slaughter later became the core of Hindu revivalism and fundamentalism. According to him, it was the meat-eating and wine-drinking foreigners, as well as the practice of slaughtering cows and other animals, that have brought trouble and suffering upon Aryans in India.²²³ The doctrines and the basic philosophy of the Arya Samaj were written and published by Dayananda in a book titled *Sathyarth Prakash*.²²⁴ 'Back to Vedas' was his creed. According to him, the Vedas were directly revealed to the ancient sages at the beginning of creation. They are holy and free from any error. The secondary group of scriptures is trustworthy, but they contain some errors and must be rejected when and where they contradict the Vedas. He tried to establish the Vedic infallibility and authority theory to match and counteract the infallibility of the Bible and the Quran.²²⁵

The Arya Samaj believes in one omniscient and omnipresent God and repudiates the many scores of Hindu traditional gods. God is unborn and formless. The Arya Samaj rejects idol worship, the most salient feature of traditional Hinduism.²²⁶ The practice of *shuddhi* was a unique element of the Arya Samajists, which differentiates it from other groups. The term *shuddhi* was first applied to the process of reconverting Muslims or Christians back home by the Arya Samajists.

Literally, *Shuddhi* means purification, but when used by Arya Samajists, it includes also reclamation and reconversion. Arya Samaj, being a Vedic Church, and as such a Hindu organization, engages in the work of reclaiming those who have left Hindu society, and it converts everyone who is prepared to accept its religious teachings. In this work of the Musulman *Mullah* and the Christian missionary, the Musulman fanatic and the Christian zealot hate it, but even the sober-minded Muslim and the broad-minded Christian do not like it. Yet it has met with considerable success in reclaiming Hindus converted to other faiths and in stemming the tide of conversion. But its greatest success lies in raising the social status of the depressed classes among

²²³ J. F. Seunarine, *Reconversion to Hinduism through Suddhi* (Madras: CLS, 1977), 15.

²²⁴ *Sathyarth Prakash* was first published in 1875, and the second revised edition was published in 1884; the first part is the exposition of founder's philosophy, while the second part is set apart for criticizing other Hindu sects, groups as well as other religions like Christianity and Islam.

²²⁵ Radhe Shyam Pareekh, *Contribution of Arya Samaj in the Making of Modern India 1875–1947* (Delhi: Aryaprathinithisabha, 1973), 221.

²²⁶ Swami Dayananda Sarasvati, *Satyarth Prakash*, Trans. By Durga Prasad (Lahore: Virjanand Press, 1908), 956.

the Hindus and preventing them from leaving Hinduism and joining other religious denomination.²²⁷

Shuddhi refers to the incorporation into Vedic tradition and society of non-Hindu by means of a ceremonial act.²²⁸ Previously, a Hindu who converted to Islam or Christianity was considered as an outcaste, and there was no process or means to restore the individual back to the caste system of the Hindu fold. Dayananda was the first one to invent a method to bring back the converted Hindus to the Hindu fold. The *Shuddhi* was a response to the Christian and Muslim missionary activities.²²⁹

The other side of the *Shuddhi* movement was the *Sangathan* movement. This movement started by Shradhananda. In 1926, he published *Hindu Sangathan: Saviour of the Dying Race*. In this book, he gave his interpretation of the causes of the decline of the Hindu race in India. The reasons for the decline were the conversion of Hindus to Islam and Christianity and the perversion of the Aryan polity, i.e., the emergence of various castes and sub-castes entwined with the idea of pollution caused the suppression of a vast number of the Hindu society who were termed 'untouchables'.²³⁰ The *Sangathan* movement meant for consolidation of the Hindu community. It precisely aimed to defend and promote the cause of Hinduism and the need to strengthen it. Strength and consolidation had been the key guiding themes in this pursuit. Even violence is advocated as a legitimate means to defend and promote the cause of Hinduism.²³¹ According to D. S. Sarma,

The word *Sangathan* means union. Therefore it implies in the program of the Arya Samaj the organization of Hindus for self-defence. No Hindu should take, lying down, the insults hurled against his religion by the preachers of the other religions. Nay, more. The Hindus should cultivate a militant spirit and go and meet the enemy and attack him in his stronghold. ...This militant spirit of the Samaj has introduced into Hindu society a tone of manliness and a sense of self-respect which it lost during the centuries of Muslim rule.²³²

²²⁷ Lajpat Raj, *The Arya Samaj* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1915), 220.

²²⁸ Op. cit., G. R. Thursby, 136.

²²⁹ Op. cit., Kenneth W. Jones, 205.

²³⁰ J. T. F. Jordens, *Swami Shradhananda, His Life and Causes* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981), 167.

²³¹ Op. cit., G. R. Thursby, 158.

²³² Op. cit., D.S. Sarma, 183.

To counteract the Christian missionary activities in the educational field, Arya Samaj started the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic schools to provide a good education for Hindu children in a Hindu environment without the fear of being converted to a foreign religion.²³³ Dayananda advocated an action plan to counter the Churches and Mosques, and to some extent succeeded in the construction of the Hindu *Rashtra* Temple. He proposed to build one Hindu *Rashtra Mandir* (Temple of the Hindu Nation) in every city and important town with a compound that could accommodate an audience of 25,000 each. There would be a hall in which the Bhagavad Gita, the Upanishads, and the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata could be recited daily. This *Rashtra Mandir* would function under the local Hindu *Sabha* which would manage the *Akharas* (place for physical exercises and games).²³⁴

Arya Samajists fought against many religious evils and perverted beliefs and practices. They had attempted to release Hinduism from the tyranny of the Brahmins by attacking the traditionally accepted Brahmin hegemony. Dayananda wanted to make religion the right of every person, rather than the matter of dominance and monopoly of a particular caste. They encouraged everyone to study the Vedas. They opposed polytheism, image worship, pilgrimages, the doctrine of different incarnation, the ideology of caste by birth and untouchability and ceremonies such as sacrifices and *shraddha* (rite after death). They wanted to remove the superstitious beliefs from the Hindu religious world.²³⁵ In the area of social life, the Samajists had opposed a number of evil practices of Hindu society and persistently tried to correct and set the society on a progressive path. They condemned the caste system, child marriage, *sati* (widow burning), polygamy and polyandry, oppression and degradation of women, and *purdah* system. They insisted equality of the sexes.²³⁶

In 1925, a grand conference of the Arya Samaj was held in Delhi, where a decision was taken to constitute a body to be known as *Arya Vir Dal* (Courageous Volunteers of Arya) for the protection of Hindus. After the conference, centres of the *Vir Dal* were established in many localities for the members to meet and train in martial

²³³ Har Bilas Sarda, *Life of Dayananda Saraswati: World Teacher* (Ajmer: Paropakarini Sabha, 1968), 31.

²³⁴ Shradhananda Sanyasi, *Hindu Sangathan – Saviour of the dying race* (Delhi: Arjun Press, 1926), 140.

²³⁵ Op. cit., J. T. F. Jordens, 275.

²³⁶ V. C. Joshi, ed. *Lala Lajpat Rai, Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 1 (Delhi: University Publishers, 1966), 150.

arts.²³⁷ The Arya Samaj was not much interested in politics in the initial stage, but Dayananda talked of the desirability of the Vedic system and self-government as better than a foreign rule.²³⁸ He was also a nationalist; much of his criticism of Christianity was in the service of Indian nationalistic self-consciousness. For him, Christianity was a foreign religion, an integral part of colonialist oppression, and its rejection was, therefore, to be considered an essential part of Indian (Hindu) self-discovery and self-assertion.²³⁹

The Arya Samaj gradually became politically motivated and influenced by its political leanings like any other fundamentalist movement in the nationalist spirit. For Dayananda, “The missionary problem is becoming very urgent and the Arya Samaj is the principal foe of Islam in India.”²⁴⁰ A leading Arya Samaj newspaper, *Pratap*, published in Lahore wrote in January 1927,

In this country, the government is based on numbers... *Shuddhi* has become a matter of life and death for the Hindus. The Muslims have grown from a negative quantity into seven million: the Christians number four million. Two hundred and twenty million Hindus are finding it difficult to live because of seventy million Muslims. If their number increases, only God knows what will happen. It is true that *Shuddhi* should be for religious purpose alone, but the Hindus have been obliged by other considerations as well to embrace their brothers (by bringing them into their fold). If Hindus will not wake up even now, they will be finished.²⁴¹

Thus, the Arya Samaj became the Hindu fundamentalist movement for unifying India nationally, socially and religiously. Dayananda consistently stirred up Hindus to vehemently oppose Christianity and Islam. His programme included reform of indigenous religion and extirpation of foreign religions. The Arya Samaj became the forerunner of the Hindu fundamentalist organisations in India. In the twentieth century,

²³⁷ Indra Vidya Vachaspati, *Arya Samaj Kaithihas*, Vol. 2 (Delhi: Sarvadesika Arya Prathinidhi Sabha, 1975), 132.

²³⁸ Op. cit., Swami Dayananda Sarasvati, 354.

²³⁹ Paul J. Griffiths, *Christianity through Non-Christian Eye* (New York: Orbis, 1994), 197.

²⁴⁰ F. K. Khan Durrani, *Swamy Dayanand: A Critical Study of His Life and Teachings* (Lahore: Tabligh Literature Society, 1929), 10.

²⁴¹ *Pratap*, Lahore: 10 Jan. 1927. Quoted in M.T. Cherian, 173.

the Arya Samajists joined hands with militant members of the RSS, both of whom saw themselves as fulfilling the fundamentals laid down by their founders.²⁴²

3.4.2 The Ramakrishna Movement

The Ramakrishna Movement is a comprised body of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. The young disciples of Ramakrishna Paramahansa gathered under the leadership of Swami Vivekananda and practised spiritual disciplines. They took informal monastic vows on the Christmas Eve of 1886. They started a monastery by the name of Ramakrishna Math at Baranagore, in Calcutta. The Math was moved to a better building in Alambazar in 1891. Vivekananda followed the teachings of Ramakrishna dictum that 'service to God should mean service to the poor'.²⁴³ In 1899, with the donation money sent by his followers from United States of America (USA), Vivekananda bought a 40-acre land on the western bank of river Ganges at a place called Belur. The Ramakrishna Math was finally shifted to Belur. In 1897, Swami Vivekananda founded the Ramakrishna Mission. The Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission are legally and financially separate bodies. But they are closely interrelated and regarded as twin organisations. The Ramakrishna Math is a monastic institution which emphasises the spiritual development of people, whereas the Ramakrishna Mission is a philanthropic body consisting of both monastic and lay members focused on welfare work. Both have their headquarters at the Belur Math.²⁴⁴ Branches of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission soon are founded in different parts of India and the world. At present, the Math and Mission have 171 centres all over the world.²⁴⁵

The birth of the Ramakrishna Movement was a natural culmination of the then prevailing socio-religious and political ideologies and temper, especially in Bengal. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838–1894), a rationalist Hindu leader from Bengal, promoted the rationalistic approach to religion, within the framework of Hindu religion. He also had the vision of bringing back the glorious and ancient civilisation of India.²⁴⁶ He generated a sense of urgency among Hindus to effect a moral and political

²⁴² Walter K. Andersen and Shridhar Damle, *Brotherhood of Saffron the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism* (London: Ves View Press, 1987), 29.

²⁴³ *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 4, Calcutta, 1989. p. 102.

²⁴⁴ C. V. Mathew, *The Saffron Mission* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1999), 117.

²⁴⁵ Swami Gahanananda, *Ramakrishna Movement for All* (Chennai: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 2007). p. 2.

²⁴⁶ Rakhal Chandra Nath, *The New Hindu Movement 1886–1911* (Calcutta: Minerva, 1982), 2.

regeneration of the society. He also emphasised re-establishment of *dharmarajya* (kingdom of righteousness) under the personal guidance of Krishna, the God himself. He portrayed India as the glorious mother, the reincarnation of Divine *Shakti* (Power). The influence of Bankim on Vivekananda was very evident in this regard. Vivekananda also portrayed India as the Mother Goddess, the Kali who alone deserve the diligent loyalty of the sons of the soil.²⁴⁷ This was important especially in the context of its political subordination to the British rule.

Vivekananda endorsed the reconversion of former Hindus. He looked upon Hindu converts to Christianity and Islam as ‘perverts’ and ‘renegades’ and believed that they left Hinduism for material gains and not out of spiritual concerns. Some were forcibly made Christians or Muslims. Therefore, it is not only right to reconvert them to their former religion but also keep them in touch with true spirituality and make them strong Hindus.²⁴⁸

The teachings of Vivekananda had a great impact on the nationalistic temper of his time and afterwards. He was considered as the Rousseau of Bengal Revolution, ‘the spiritual father of Indian nationalism’ and the ‘arch revivalist’.²⁴⁹ Vivekananda was convinced of the necessity of building a glorious future for India on the basis of her glorious past. For Vivekananda, India is the “old Mother of all that is noble, or moral or spiritual, the land which the sages trod, the land in which Godlike men still live and breathe. This is the motherland of philosophy, of spirituality, and of ethics, of sweetness, gentleness, and love.”²⁵⁰ Vivekananda’s vision of a glorious India in the future was essentially built upon a religious foundation. He declared that unity in religion, i.e., recognition of one religion all over the land, was absolutely necessary as the first condition of the future of India. It is on the basis of Hindu spirituality alone that India can enter into the Golden Age. Reconstruction of society and retrieval of lost nationhood are possible only if the Hindu religion is revived and consolidated in this land. A strong religion essentially means a strong nation.²⁵¹

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 42.

²⁴⁸ *Selections from the Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. V (Calcutta: Advaita Ashram, 1993), p.233.

²⁴⁹ B. R. Purohit, *Hindu Revivalism and Indian Nationalism* (Sagar: Sathi Prakashan, 1965), 69.

²⁵⁰ Gambhirananda, *History of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission*, 3rd ed. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1983), 56.

²⁵¹ Op. cit., *Selection from the Complete...*, 278. Cf. Swami Vivekananda, *Our Motherland*, Compiled by P. Sankaranarayanan (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1963), 25.

For Vivekananda, India alone is the *Punya bhoomi* (holy land), and it has the mission to the rest of the world. A revival of Hinduism which is ‘the life-current of national life’ is essential in this regard. Hinduism must be consolidated, and the society must be reconstructed on the basis of Hindu spirituality. Hinduism is the only true religion in the ultimate analysis. All other religions are inferior to Hinduism, and they are meant only for novices in spirituality. Hinduism is going to be the Universal Religion and the final overthrow of all other religious forms.²⁵² The Ramakrishna Movement set a clear and distinct pace for later Hindu missionary movements in India as well as abroad. The religious nationalism was diligently promoted by this movement in India.

3.4.3 Akhila Bharata Hindu Mahasabha

On 30 December 1906, the Indian Muslim leaders gathered in Dacca under the leadership of Nawab Vaqar-ul-Mulk and laid the foundation for an exclusive political party for the Muslims named Indian Union Muslim League to safeguard Muslim interests in India.²⁵³

In the early twentieth century, many Hindu leaders felt that the Indian National Congress (INC) had a pro-Muslim attitude. This added with the formation of Muslim League provoked the Hindu leaders to work towards the establishment of an exclusively Hindu organisation. As a result, Lala Lajpat Rai, a senior Congress leader, started *Sanatan Dharma Mahasabha* in 1906 at Allahabad.²⁵⁴ But they could achieve little in the Indian political scenario because the members of the Mahasabha were active members of the INC, and their voices were suppressed by the leaders. In 1915, Pandit Madan Mohan Malvia and Maharaja Manindra Chandra Chandi, both Hindu leaders, met on the occasion of *Kumbha Mela*²⁵⁵ at Haridwar and formed the Hindu Mahasabha.²⁵⁶ The aim of the Hindu Mahasabha was to protect and promote Hindu culture and civilisation for the advancement of Hindu *Rashtra* (Kingdom). Later, the

²⁵² Ibid., Vol. 3, 275.

²⁵³ Mahmud Husain, *A History of the Freedom Movement*, Vol. iii (Delhi: Renaissance Publishing House, 1984), 29.

²⁵⁴ Indra Prakash, *Hindu Mahasabha: It's Contribution to Indian Politics* (New Delhi: Akhila Bharat Hindu Mahasabha, 1966), 10.

²⁵⁵ “*KumbhaMela* is a mass Hindu pilgrimage of faith in which Hindus gather to bathe in the sacred river Ganges. The main festival site is located on the banks of the river Ganges at Haridwar.” www.kumbhmelaharidwar.co.in cited on 06/02/2017.

²⁵⁶ D. D. Pattanaik, *Hindu Nationalism in India Modern Trends*, No. 4 (New Delhi: Deep and Deep, 1998), 125.

name was changed into *Akhila Bharata Hindu Mahasabha*, and political agendas were added to the basic tenets.²⁵⁷

3.4.3.1 Ideology and function of the Akhila Bharata Hindu Mahasabha

The Mahasabha began to grow in North India from 1926 onwards. By the 1930s, the Mahasabha played a major role by actively advocating communal interests in the political arena, as a Hindu counterpart to the Muslim League, and in opposition to the secular nationalism of the Congress.²⁵⁸ By 1940, it gained great momentum among the fundamentalist Hindus.

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883–1966) joined the movement in 1937; he was a brilliant thinker with a background of western education. He served as the President of Mahasabha for seven years, and during his tenure, the Mahasabha shot to prominence by his untiring work. The ideology and philosophy laid down by Savarkar were named Hindu *Sanghatan*.²⁵⁹ In 1907, Savarkar wrote a book, *The War of Independence*, in which he demonstrated the revolution of 1857 in terms of Hindu nationalism. He refused to call the said upheaval the *Sepoy* (Soldiers) Mutiny, the nomenclature coined by the British authorities and historians to undermine the uprising. He considered it the first nationalist movement of its kind where common people were involved. Another of his important work is *Bharat Itihaske Chee Swarnim Prusth* (Six Golden Epochs of Indian History). His interpretation of Indian history is marked with the passionate glorification of the Vedic Hinduism. However, his classic work is *Hindutva: Who Is a Hindu?* Written in the Cellular Jail and published in 1923.²⁶⁰

His doctrine of *Hindu Rashtra* (Hindu Nation) and *Hindutva* (Hinduness) pleaded for a great Hindu empire from the Cape Comorin to the Himalayas. His idea of *Hindutva* explicitly distinguished the Hindu nation from the orthodox Hindu religion. For him, the Muslims and Christians in India were foreign elements in the Indian subcontinent. The basic principle of the Mahasabha was the unity of Indians as a single race, single culture and single religion. It advocated the establishment of a *Hindu Raj*

²⁵⁷ Op. cit. Indra Prakash, 12.

²⁵⁸ Daniel Gold, "Organized Hinduism: From Vedic Truth to Hindu Nation," in Martin E. Marty and Scott Appleby, eds. *Fundamentalisms Observed* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991), 540.

²⁵⁹ DhanjayKeer, *Veer Savarkar* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1966), 261.

²⁶⁰ Prem Vaidya, *Savarkar a Lifelong Crusader* (New Delhi: New Age International Publishers, 1996), 119.

in India with a form of government in accordance with the Hindu conception of polity and economy.²⁶¹

Savarkar's definition of a Hindu was an exclusivist tactic to alienate Muslims and Christians from the national mainstream due to their different faiths. According to him,

A Hindu... is one who looks upon the land that extends from *Sindhu* to *Sindhu* from the Indus to the Seas, as the land of his forefathers-his *pitrbhu* (fatherland); who inherits the blood of that race whose first discernible source could be traced to the Vedic *Saptasindhus*, and which on its onward march, assimilating much that was incorporated and ennobling much that was assimilated, has come to be known as the Hindu people; who has inherited and claims as his own the culture of that race, as expressed chiefly in their common classic language the *Sanskrt* and represented by a common history, a common literature, art and architecture, law and jurisprudence, rites and rituals, ceremonies and sacraments, fairs and festivals, and who above all addresses this land, this *Sindhusthan*, as his *punyabhu* (Holy land), as his Holy Land the land of his prophets and seers, of his godmen and gurus, the land of piety and pilgrimage. These are the essentials of *Hindutva* – a common *Sanskrti* (culture). All these essentials could best be summed up by stating in brief that he is a Hindu to whom *Sindhusthan* is not only a *pitrbhu* and *jati* are clearly denoted and connoted by the word *pitrbhu*; while the third essential of *Sanskrti* is pre-eminently implied by the word *punyabhu*, as it is precisely *Sanskrti* including *sanskaras*, i.e., rites and rituals, ceremonies and sacraments, that makes a land a Holy Land.²⁶²

For him, nobody could become a true Hindu by being Indian simply by birth. One could become a territorial Indian by birth but not a real Indian. Savarkar intended to consolidate Hindus against Muslims. The Hindu–Muslim conflict was strife between different cultures, races and nations, and a legacy handed down to us by centuries of cultural, religious and national antagonism.²⁶³ The Mahasabha movement thus became highly motivated by political undercurrents, aiming at the establishment of an exclusively Hindu nation.

²⁶¹ Op. cit., D. D. Pattanaik, 128.

²⁶² V. D. Savarkar, *Hindutva, Who Is a Hindu*, 7thed. (Mumbai: Swatantryaveer Savarkar Rashtriya Smarak, 1999), 72; Cf. V. D. Savarkar, *Hindutva* (Poona: S. P. Gokhale, 1949), 5.

²⁶³ S. R. Bakshi, *Struggle for Independence* (New Delhi: Anmol Publications, 1993), 140.

The ideology of the Mahasabha was known as *Sanghatan* meaning Hindu nationalism. Hindus must have a country of their own. *Shuddhi* embodied not only religious but also political and national interests. *Shuddhi* was practised by members of the Mahasabha, for fear of declining membership of Hindus due to growing conversions.²⁶⁴ Aggressive militancy was another feature of the Hindu Mahasabha. Savarkar went to the extent of threatening and challenging Muslims, with the fate of the Jews under Hitler's rule in Germany. Militancy was inculcated in the cadres of Hindu Mahasabha, and the doctrine of non-violence was opposed vehemently by the Mahasabha members.²⁶⁵

Another important aspect of the Mahasabha was the striving for a common language. It demanded the teaching and use of Sanskrit all over India. However, Hindi being an Aryan language and having its root from Sanskrit, in which the Hindu scriptures are written, should be the national language and be used in pan India. The language is a common possession of the whole nation; it should be called Hindustani or Hindi. According to Savarkar, "Hindudom is bound and marked out as a people and nation by themselves not only by the ties of a common Holy land in which the religion took birth but by the ties of a common culture, a common language, a common history, essentially of a common fatherland as well."²⁶⁶

The Mahasabha and its undisputed leader Savarkar created a great impact among the militant Hindus. Though it was meant to be a political organisation, the Mahasabha was more religious than political in its activities. Politics linked to religion was the pattern of its functioning. The Mahasabha encouraged Hindus to fight for a glorious future on the basis of the past, and to that end, *Hindutva* became the guiding factor.

3.4.4 Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh

The RSS was founded by Keshav Baliram Hedgewar²⁶⁷ (1889–1940) with a small group of young men on 27 September 1925. He started it as an opposition movement to

²⁶⁴ Des Raj Goyal, *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (New Delhi: Radhakrishna Prakashan, 1979), 292; Hindu Mahasabha, *Presidential Address*, 20th Annual Session 1938.

²⁶⁵ Hindu Mahasabha, *Presidential Address*, 22nd Annual Session 1940.

²⁶⁶ Hindu Mahasabha, *Presidential Address*, 29th Annual Session 1937.

²⁶⁷ "K. B. Hedgewar was born on 1 April 1889, in a family of Telugu Brahmin. His family migrated to Nagpur in the early part of the nineteenth century to escape from Muslim persecution at Kandkurti, near the Maharashtra border. His family profession was teaching the Vedas. But Hedgewar graduated as medical doctor from the National Medical College in Kolkata where he stayed for 6 years. He was

the INC whose policy was pro-Muslims. The prime aim of the RSS was to establish Hindu *Rashtra* (Kingdom).²⁶⁸ Hedgewar believed that the root causes of the foreign invasion and the downfall of the Indian civilisation were internal divisions and conflicts among Hindu groups. So, he wanted to unite Hindus for the purpose of throwing out the colonial rule. He also realised that social fragmentation, industrialisation and modernism, as well as the Muslim and Christian invasions, had created a feeling among Hindus that they were alienated, rootless and deprived of leadership.²⁶⁹ Only Hindus could free Hindustan, and they alone could save Hindu culture. Only the united Hindus could save the country. Youths of Hindu communities had to be united by a strong character and a deep love for their country.²⁷⁰

Hindu culture was the life breath of Hindustan. So, Hindu culture had to be protected and safeguarded; otherwise, Hindustan would become a mere geographical entity. Like Dayananda, Hedgewar had a more inward vision. He was very convinced that what Hindus needed was a communal discipline and revitalisation, not merely a political party.²⁷¹ He adopted certain principles from the Maharashtrian (People of Maharashtra State) tradition, an organisation combining a gymnastic, military and monastery tradition.

Madhav Sadhasiv Golwalkar (1906–1973), a college lecturer, succeeded Hedgewar on 20 June 1940. He became a great leader and was known as Guruji. During his tenure, the RSS had a rapid growth and spread all over India. He was the most distinguished ideologue of the RSS, and his words were attributed a unique value by the members of the RSS.²⁷²

actively involved in revolutionary activities, and he also had close contact with the Ramakrishna Mission. He was unmarried. He joined the Congress Party and became an active member. He was in prison for a year from 1921 August to 1922 July. He was dismayed by the lack of discipline in the Congress volunteer organization. Moreover, he felt that non-violence would not attract the young men. He held meetings with prominent politicians in Nagpur between 1922 and 1924. In October 1923, the Muslim and Hindu communities in Nagpur confronted each other over the issue of music before Mosques. During this time, a Hindu Sabha was established, and Hedgewar became the Secretary. Riots broke out in the city. About this time, he read a handwritten manuscript of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar's *Hindutva*. It profoundly affected his thinking about the Hindu nation. In March 1925, he sought the advice of Savarkar, and started the RSS." Walter Andersen, "The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh: I: Early Concerns," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 7, 11 (Mar. 11, 1972), 591–592. Sanjeev Kelkar, *Lost Years of the RSS* (New Delhi: SAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd, 2011), 1.

²⁶⁸ Achin Vanaik, "The Enemy Within," *Sunday Review, The Times of India*, Delhi: Dec.26, 1990.

²⁶⁹ Ramesh N. Rao, *Secular "God" Blame Hindu "Demons" The Sangh Parivar through the Mirror of Distortion* (New Delhi: HarAnnad Publications, 2001), 83.

²⁷⁰ Sri Guruji, *The Man and His Mission* (Delhi: Bharat Prakashan, 1956), 25.

²⁷¹ H. V. Seshadri, *RSS: A Vision in Action* (Bangalore: Sahitya Sindu Prakashan, 1998), 13.

²⁷² Op. cit., M.T. Cherian, 191.

3.4.4.1 Ideology and functions of the RSS

Two prime themes emerged as the purpose of the RSS in its formative stages; firstly, to unite Hindus in order to throw out the colonial rule; and secondly, to organise Hindus against the external dangers of Islam and Christianity which tended to denationalise them. The ideology of the movement further developed between 1925 and 1951. Hedgewar was influenced by Savarkar's theory of *Hindutva*. There was no blueprint of RSS ideology as Hedgewar believed more in the organisation than in theorisation. For ideological purposes, the RSS depended mostly on the Hindu Mahasabha, particularly on Savarkar's ideology of *Hindutva*. Besides this, the RSS practised a prayer and pledge which indicated its ideological orientation.²⁷³

The following prayer was considered a salutation to the Hindu Rashtra: "By God, I swear that I shall do my best-sacrifice my all-to preserve and promote the cause of Hindu Dharma, Hindu Rashtra, and Hindu Sanskriti..."²⁷⁴

The pledge was as follows:

I pledge this day that I will remain a member of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh throughout my life. I shall carry out unhesitatingly any order given by the Sangh. I shall go for work wherever required. Whatever defects of the Sangh I shall come to know, I will never disclose them before any person not connected with the Sangh, even at the cost of my life. I shall be true in my behaviour and conduct towards not only Swayamsevak Sangh but to all Hindus and will unhesitatingly serve them. In the end, I swear that I shall serve the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh with all my body, heart and money for in it lies the betterment of Hindu and the country.²⁷⁵

Initially, the members of the RSS were mostly Brahmins; however, later the emphasis was laid on a casteless Hindu society. One of the distinctive features of the RSS was the *shakha* (branch), the local units of the RSS, where the members (mainly young boys) met daily for physical and ideological training. The participation of the backward and untouchable castes was encouraged in these *shakhas*.²⁷⁶ This ideal of the casteless

²⁷³ B.R. Purohit, *Hindu Revivalism and Indian Nationalism* (Sagar: Sathi Prakashan, 1965), 140; S.S. Savarkar and G.M. Joshi, eds. *Historic Statements: V.D. Savarkar* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1967), 1.

²⁷⁴ B. R. Purohit, *Hindu Revivalism and Indian Nationalism* (Sagar: Sathi Prakashan, 1965), 148.

²⁷⁵ Partha S. Ghosh, *BJP and the Evolution of Hindu Nationalism: From Periphery to Centre* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers & Distributors, 1999), 71.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 72.

Hindu nation, however, could not be retained, and there were indications of its dilution during the late 1950s. Leaders like Deendayal Upadhyaya insisted on the need to restore a caste hierarchical society.²⁷⁷

The RSS engaged in the thorough and careful propaganda of demonising Muslims and Christians with a separatist worldview. They considered the minorities a problem to the nation. The Sangh blamed Muslims for their anti-minority activities in Pakistan and Bangladesh, and through that, it justified its anti-minority stand in India. The Sangh argued that since Muslims had already got a separate country, Pakistan, all Muslims must go to Pakistan; otherwise, the Muslims left in India should accept India as a Hindu nation and Hindus as its national community.²⁷⁸ It also propagated the idea that the Congress leaders' vision falsely conceived India as a composite nation – a patchwork of pluralities having no internal moral unity. The secularist parties gave special privileges to Muslims and Christians which prevent the minorities from integrating their non-Indian culture into the mainstream of national life. They ruled out true national integration by perpetuating 'minoritism' for electoral advantage and, in effect, discriminating the Hindu majority.²⁷⁹

To revitalise Hindus, Hedgewar presented the example of the ideal hero Shivaji, a seventeenth-century Maharashtrian king who led a successful revolt against the Mogul empire. Shivaji's empire was the model Hindu empire fighting against Muslims.²⁸⁰ However, from Golwalkar onwards, the Arya Samaj, Hindu Mahasabha and RSS also started injecting the ideology of a golden past of Hindus and encouraged them to achieve the same fame in the future by fighting the invaders. The RSS accepted the *Hindutva* ideology of Savarkar in its fullness. It aimed at a Hindu revival and political assertion of Hinduness. Hindu temples had been destroyed throughout the land by the Muslim invaders in the past. Therefore, the regeneration of Hindustan required a restoration of Hindu unity and the glories of the pre-Muslim age.²⁸¹

The exclusivist ideology of nation and culture was another characteristic of the RSS. For Golwalkar, the word 'Nation' is a compound of five distinct factors fused into

²⁷⁷ Op. cit., Christophe Jaffrelot, "Hindu Nationalism...", 522.

²⁷⁸ Balraj Madhok, "Minorities problem and its solution", *Why Hindu Rashtra?* (New Delhi: Suruchi Prakashan, 1990), 39.

²⁷⁹ Op. cit., Ramesh N. Rao, 128.

²⁸⁰ Stan Lourdasamy, *Religion as Political Weapon* (Calcutta: Multi Book Agency, 1990), 168.

²⁸¹ Vinod Ramachandra, *Faith in Conflict? Christian Integrity in a Multi-Cultural World* (London: Intervarsity Press, 1999), 50.

one indissoluble whole. The five 'unities' are "Geographical (country), Racial (race), Religious (religion), Cultural (culture) and Linguistic (language). The loss or destruction of any one of these means the end of the Nation as a Nation."²⁸² Based on the above understanding of Hindustan, the Hindu race with its Hindu religion, culture and language completes the concept of nation. All those not belonging to the nation naturally fall out of the pale of the real national life.²⁸³

The Muslims and Christians in India, though they were born in this land, were not loyal to this land. They had completely lost their love and devotion to the country. According to the RSS, all Muslims were traitors. Christians were also condemned for allegedly preferring the English language, instead of Sanskrit or Hindi. Unless they abandoned their differences with the Hindu understanding of culture, religion, language and nation, and adopted the Hindu ideals, they would not be permitted to live in India.²⁸⁴ Germany had already shown how it was difficult for a foreign race to be in a nation-state. The experiences of the German Jews were a warning for the Muslims and Christians in India.²⁸⁵

Golwalkar used provocative language to raise the emotions of Hindus against Muslims and Christians. Both the communities were trying for political control over Hindus. Another accusation against Christians was that they were involved in a strategy consisting of engineering a rebellion of Dalits against other Hindus and the government with the cry of an independent Dalitstan.²⁸⁶

The RSS was able to make Hindus feel that it was the only and the best defender of Hindus and their religion. Through active participation in communal riots, social work in Hindu refugee camps and so on, the RSS had a massive impact among Hindus and created enmity towards Muslims and Christians. It had set up a series of affiliates or family members for making its work easier so that the RSS itself would concentrate on the cadre training and formation of volunteers for the task of keeping the work going smoothly. Many of its cadres would be sent to work in organisations assigned to the specialised aims and goals of the Sangh. These offices included electoral politics, missionary work and reconversion among Dalits and tribals. With the emergence of the

²⁸² M.S. Golwalkar, *We or Our Nationhood Defined* (Nagpur: Bharat Publications, 1939), 83.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 99.

²⁸⁴ *Op. cit.*, M.T. Cherian, 199.

²⁸⁵ *Op.cit.*, M.S. Golwalkar, 87.

²⁸⁶ *Op.cit.*, M. T. Cherian, 200.

Parivar (Family) system, the *Hindutva* ideology acquired a new meaning and importance.²⁸⁷

In the early days, the RSS was not very interested in politics, but in the post-independence period, it felt the need for political involvement. However, as the RSS was registered as an apolitical organisation, it was not permitted to involve in direct politics. In 1931, the RSS helped Syamaprasad Mukherjee to start the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, which later paved the way for the BJP with RSS ethos to spread the *Hindutva* culture. The ideology of *Hindutva* originated from the educated middle class, and it had very little to do with the world of sectarian groups and god-men of Hinduism.²⁸⁸ To find a solution to this problem, in 1964, Golwalkar called for a meeting to discuss and establish contact with Hindus abroad. People from various Hindu sects gathered and discussed the concern; finally, Golwalkar laid the foundation for the VHP and made Sivaram Shankar Apte the first general secretary. While the RSS is cultural, the VHP is social and religious, and the BJP is political. Each wing is independent in its own domain.²⁸⁹

The RSS took much interest in educational programmes. It had around 5000 *Sishu Mandirs* (Children Centres) for primary education. *Vidya Bharati* was another scheme going up to high school and occasionally up to college levels. It was the largest educational organisation in the non-governmental sector with 13,000 educational institutes including *Saraswati Vidya Mandirs*, with 79,000 teachers and over 17 lakh students. *Samskar Kendras* are the arrangements made for the education of the children of urban slums and remote village areas. In all these schools, although the government syllabus was taught, occasional lectures on religion, mythology and the need for dying for the Hindu religion were given to motivate the pupils to be future *Swayamsevaks*.²⁹⁰

The RSS incorporated religious, cultural and political fundamentalism under one umbrella. Dividing the offices between the various organisations in the family and starting new organisations according to the need, the RSS has been a success. It has the following organisations, headed by RSS volunteers, for its different purposes: *Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram* for addressing tribals; *Akhil Bharatiya Sahitya Parishad* for literature;

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 201.

²⁸⁸ Sanjeev Kelkar, *Lost Years of the RSS* (New Delhi: SAGE, 2011), 67.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 81.

²⁹⁰ Op. cit., M.T. Cherian, 201.

Pragya Bharati, Deendayal Research Institute for intellectuals; *Bharatiya Itihas Sankalan Yojana* for historians; *Bharatiya Shikshan Mandal* and *Akhila Bharatiya Rashtriya Shaikshik Mahasnagh* for teachers; *Sanskrit Bharati* for language; *Sanska Bharati* for culture; *Seva Bharati*, *Hindu Seva Pratishthan*, Swami Vivekanand Medical Mission and National Medicos Organization for slum-dwellers; *Bharatiya Kushta Nivarak Sangh* for patients with leprosy; *Sahkar Bharati* for co-operatives; *Akhil Bharatiya Grahak Panchayat* for consumers; *Bharat Prakashan*, *Suruchi Prakashan*, *Lokhit Prakashan*, *Gyanganga Prakashan*, *Archana Prakashan*, *Bharatiya Vichar Sadhana*, *Madhav Prakashan*, *Rashtrorathan Sahitya*, *Sadhana Pustak Prakashan* and *Akashvani Prakashan* for the publication of newspapers and other propaganda materials; *Vigyan Bharati* for scientists; *Samajik Samarasta Manch* for integration; *Vivekananda Kendra*, *VHP*, *Hindu Jagaran Manch* and *Bajrang Dal* for religion and proselytisation; *Bharat Vikas Parishad* for industries; *Rashtriya Sikh Sangat* for Sikhs; *Poorva-Sainik Seva Parishad* for ex-servicemen; *Bharatiya Swayamsevak Sangh*, *Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh*, *Hindu Sevasangh*, *Sanatana Dharma Swayamsevak Sangh*, *Friends of India Society International* for NRIs; *BJP* a political party; *Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh* a trade union wing; *Rashtriya Sevika Samiti* and *Akhila Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad* students' wings; and *Swadeshi Jagaran Manch* an economic wing. The list is virtually endless.²⁹¹

3.4.5 Viswa Hindu Parishad

VHP was started on 29 August 1964, after a well thought-out plan of the RSS leader Golwalkar and the initiative of S. S. Apte at Mumbai. It was an enterprise of the RSS to bring all Hindu sects and groups under one banner and to have contact with the Hindus abroad. The prime aim of the VHP was to unite all castes and parties as a non-political organisation which could jointly work together for a Hindu nation.²⁹²

3.4.5.1 Ideology and functions of the VHP

The core of VHP was made up of religious specialists and the celibate monks who acted as spiritual leaders. The VHP provided an opportunity for the RSS to identify itself with the Hindu ecclesiastical community. The aims of the VHP were “to consolidate and strengthen Hindu society, to protect and spread Hindu values – ethical and spiritual –

²⁹¹ Ibid., 188.

²⁹² Ashish Nandi et al., *Creating a Nationality: The Ramajanmabhoomi Movement and fear of the Self* (New Delhi: OUP, 2000), 89.

and to make them relevant to contemporary society, and finally to establish and strengthen the links among the Hindus living abroad.”²⁹³ According to S. S. Apte, the main objective was to establish a Hindu world in order to save it from the evil eyes of the Christian, Islamic and Communist world.²⁹⁴ Christians and Muslims were organised well enough to get their demands and needs from the democratic government, but Hindus did not organise themselves so their voices were not heard by the government. The VHP was formed to integrate the majority of Hindus, and its major feat was to bring a large number of competitive ascetic orders and religious leaders under the banner of Hindu nationalism.²⁹⁵

The VHP divided the country into 5 zones, 10 regions, 25 provinces, 210 divisions, 706 districts and 7180 taluks to achieve its goal. It had more than 18 departments to look after different functions. Special attention was given to the backward castes and Dalits to educate and to absorb them into the Hindu way of life. It also divided the whole world into four regions in order to have easier access to the Hindus abroad. It was active among the Hindu students abroad in the universities and educational institutions.²⁹⁶

The VHP had its roots at ground level. It started to branch in all areas with 2000 or more people. The RSS trained people for *pracharaks* (preachers) of their ideology and sent them to different wings. The VHP also trained its own full-time *dharma pracharaks* (religious preachers) to work among the cadres.²⁹⁷ The VHP was able to bring together a considerable number of leaders of Hindu sects on one platform. It created a forum for saints and seers from different sects and called it *Dharma Sansad*. The functions of this forum were to provide religious order for sustaining the integrity of Hindu society, to develop shrines and temples into powerful cultural centres, and to help the reconversion of those who voluntarily opted for it.²⁹⁸ It has been trying to erect an ecclesiastical structure and to hold pan-Hindu festivals on the model of Christian

²⁹³ Walter K. Anderson and Shridhar D. Damle, *Brotherhood in Saffron the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism* (London: Vest View Press), 1987, 133.

²⁹⁴ S. S. Apte, “Why Viswa Hindu Parishad,” *Organiser*. Diwali Special Issue, 1964, 15.

²⁹⁵ Vinod Ramachandra, *Faith in Conflict? Christian Integrity in a Multicultural World* (London: Intersity Press, 1999), 55.

²⁹⁶ Op. cit., Ashis Nandi et al., 90.

²⁹⁷ Vasdha Dalmia et al., *Charisma and Canon* (New Delhi: OUP, 2001), 399.

²⁹⁸ Op. cit., Ashish Nandi et al., 91.

and Muslim aggressors in order to unify Hindus and thereby offer greater resistance to rival religions.²⁹⁹

The VHP countered the conversion activities of the Islamic and Christian missionaries by adopting the programmes of the earlier movements like the Arya Samaj and the Hindu Mahasabha, promoting cow protection, use of Hindi and reconversion movements.³⁰⁰ By declaring Muslims and Christians as the eternal enemies of Hindus, the VHP wanted to succeed in polarising Hindu sentiments. The regeneration of Bharat thus required a restoration of Hindu unity and the glories of the pre-Muslim age. The immigration and growth in the population of Muslims threatened the survival of the true children of the land. *Hindutva* alone could provide the possibility of the nation's survival, against secularism which weakened the strength of the Hindus from within.³⁰¹

The VHP mainly focused on establishing schools, health centres and temples with the work of proselytization among the tribals and Dalits in order to stop the Christian and Muslim influence among these communities. Using the traditional symbols of the popular aspects of Hinduism, it gained enormous success in the organisation of Hindus at the grass-root level.³⁰² It demanded the restoration of Ayodhya, Mathura and Kashi – the three disputed places of worship to Hindus. It claimed a wide support of almost all sects of Hinduism. It also demanded the restoration of all Hindu shrines ravaged by the Muslim invaders in the past. It was felt that these moves alone could bring about the true emotional integration and strengthening of the Hindu–Muslim unity.³⁰³

In 1996, VHP presented a 'Hindu agenda' before the political parties to salvage Bharat and Hindu nation. This agenda had 40 points which became the agenda of the political wing of the RSS, the BJP. Some of the points of the Hindu agenda are as follows: *Hindutva* and nationalism are synonymous; the Hindu interest is the national interest; and only 'Bharat' which has the ancient, glorious and historical connotations

²⁹⁹ Op. cit., Vasdha Dalmia et al., 403.

³⁰⁰ Op. cit., Ashish Nandi et al., 87.

³⁰¹ Vinod Ramachandra, *Faith in Conflict? Christian Integrity in a Multicultural World* (London: Intervarsity Press, 1999).

³⁰² Yogendra K. Malik and V. B. Singh, *Hindu Nationalists in India: The Rise of Bharatiya Janata Party* (New Delhi: Visthar Publications, 1995), 168. Cf. Robert Erick Fryckenberg, "Hindu fundamentalism and the structural stability of Indis," in Martin. E. Marty and Scott Appleby, eds. *Fundamentalisms and the State Remaking Politics, Economies and Militance* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1993), 246.

³⁰³ Asgar Ali Engineer, ed. *Babri Masjid Ramjanamabhoomi Controversy* (Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1990), 228.

will have constitutional recognition. Slaughter of cows will be banned in India, and there will be cow *seva* ministries. Conversion of Hindus by the force of fraudulent or other means will be banned. All foreign remittance to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) will be blocked, so that money and material will not be used for the conversion of Hindus. A uniform civil code is to be enacted. Privileges to the minorities will be extended to the Hindu majorities also. Rights of the lower-caste people and tribes will be withdrawn on conversion.³⁰⁴

The VHP founded the Bajrang Dal as its youth wing on 1 October 1984 in Uttar Pradesh. It organised major training camps called *shakhas* in different states. They trained thousands of young men for group activities, self-defence with arms and gave them religious and cultural education. Their slogan was 'service, safety and culture'. Their agendas were preventing the slaughter of cows, the liberation of the Ramjanmabhoomi temple in Ayodhya, Krishnajanmabhoomi temple in Mathura and Vishwanath temple in Kasi, which were the disputed places of worship.³⁰⁵ They also aimed at protecting India's Hindu identity from the dangers of increasing Muslim population, Christian conversions and anti-national Hindus. Bajrang Dal fostered fundamentalism by sponsoring communal riots and disturbing the minorities.³⁰⁶

3.4.6 Bharatiya Janata Party

The RSS was attacking the secular status of the government. One of its former members, Nathuram Godse, assassinated Mahatma Gandhi in 1948. This incurred a ban on the RSS. To come out of the ban, the RSS had to fight a great deal of legal battle with political opponents. The struggle with the government prompted the RSS leaders to think about political influence and the need for political representation. The top leadership of the RSS was, however, opposed to its conversion into a political party, but was willing to support the party which sympathised with the party's activities and ideological goals.³⁰⁷ With the support of RSS workers, Shyam Prasad Mukherjee organised the new party named Bharatiya Jana Sangh in October 1951. The philosophy of the Jana Sangh was based on the RSS ideology. As the Jana Sangh was not a success

³⁰⁴ 'Respect the Hindu Sentiments,' *Organiser*, Feb.4, 1996.

³⁰⁵ Human Rights without Frontiers Int'l, *India: Hindu Extremist Movements* (Delhi: Nov. 2009), 20.

³⁰⁶ M.T. Cherian, *Hindutva Agenda and Minority Rights; A Christian Response* (Bangalore: Centre for Contemporary Christianity, 2007), 216.

³⁰⁷ Yogendra K. Malik and V. B. Singh, *Hindu Nationalists in India: The Rise of Bharatiya Janata Party* (New Delhi: Visthar Publications, 1995), 30.

in the political scenario, it was revived with a new name Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on 5 April 1980. Atal Bihari Vajpayee was the founding President of the party.³⁰⁸

3.4.6.1 Ideology and functions of the BJP

In December 1980, the first national convention of the BJP held in Mumbai declared the following five principles; “1) nationalism and national integration, 2) democracy, 3) positive secularism, 4) Gandhian socialism and 5) value-based politics.”³⁰⁹ The RSS and its affiliates opposed secularism as a state policy to the core. However, the BJP emerged with a new formulation as ‘positive secularism’ against Nehruvian secularism. It was explained to be a policy of equal treatment of all religions, a more positive idea for the stability of democracy. In its interpretation, positive secularism would thus guarantee nationalism and national integration. In order to be secular, therefore, the country’s political system must not reject or stand above religion but inculcate religious ideals. Secularism must base itself on the foundation of the Indian cultural heritage, which is seen as equal to *Hindutva* and Hindu nation. The BJP interprets the term ‘Hindu’ in terms of geographical nationalism.³¹⁰

The BJP relies on cultural nationalism as its philosophy. It stresses its policies in terms of scrapping Article 370, which gives special privileges to the State of Jammu and Kashmir. Scrapping and replacing the Minority Commission with a Human Rights Commission, implementation of a Uniform Civil Code and the construction of the Ram Temple in the Ramjanmabhoomi. The idea is that India should be only for Hindus. Though everybody can have their own religion, no one will be allowed to profess extraterritorial loyalties.³¹¹ This is to alienate Muslims and Christians in the name of extraterritorial loyalties.

The BJP is a political party which claims to be the agent of the true nation that is Hindu *Rashtra* (Kingdom). It insists all Indians understand the glorious past of Hindu *Rashtra* and fight for the glorious future. It affirms that to achieve a glorious future, the

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 37; Cf., Pratap Chandra Swain, *Bharatiya Janata Party Profile and Performance* (New Delhi: A. P. H. Publishing House, 2001), 49.

³⁰⁹ Partha S. Ghosh, *BJP and the Evolution of Hindu Nationalism from Periphery to Centre* (Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2000), 86.

³¹⁰ H. K. Paranjape, “Secularism real and pseudo,” *Mainstream*, Vol. 29, No.30, May 18, 1991, 8.

³¹¹ Vijaya Kumar Malhotra, “Religion and Politics,” *Hindustan Times*, Delhi: Feb.2, 1996.

foreigners, Muslims and Christians, are hindrances; therefore, they should be taught a lesson. The BJP follows the ideology of the RSS as its basic philosophy.³¹²

For BJP, the modern Hinduism is a political religion. It is a kind of reaction against changes, both ideological and institutional. This form of political religion is highly contagious. Within this kind of movements, threads of 'Hindu nationalism' have cleverly been carried out of elements from all previous constructions of 'Hindu' consciousness mentioned above.³¹³ The Sangh Parivar³¹⁴ had viciously forged together strands of highly religious and highly nationalistic fervour. This development could be traced from the earliest movement to the Arya Samaj, Hindu Mahasabha, VHP, RSS and BJP.

The ideology of *Hindutva* is proselytising and political in nature, prejudiced and imperialistic in demands, and militant in attitude. It claims to represent all the caste Hindus of India and appeals for subordination and subjugation of all Dalits and tribals ('untouchables') of India to the Hindu nation. The hate and terror generated by *Hindutva* have been both religious and nationalist at the same time. Any kind of aggressive nationalism, if rooted in culture, ethnicity, religion, language or any combination of such factors, will lead to imperialistic aggression.³¹⁵

Hindutva has been the cumulative consequence of a rising self-awareness of group mobilisations that began to shape at the beginning of the nineteenth century. As a result, by the early twentieth century, the new Hinduism emerged with a clear definition. The core of this Hinduism was extremely religious, extremely nationalistic, and extremely political and resembled the fascist movement of the 1930s in Europe. This *Hindutva* fundamentalism began in 1915 by the militant activities of the Hindu Mahasabha and further carried forward by the VHP and RSS.³¹⁶ The Sangh Parivar³¹⁷ can be seen bringing India to the edge of a major tyrannous revolution. It also has

³¹² Op. cit., M.T. Cherian, 229.

³¹³ Op. cit., Mark T. B. Laing, 12.

³¹⁴ "Etymologically '*Sangh Parivar*' means 'family association' (*Sangh* = association; *Parivar* = family). The term *Sangh Parivar* is used to denote collectively those who believe in the same religio-political and cultural ideology. Sangh Parivar is a collection of over 200 organizations, having one goal – the realization of one people, one nation, one culture, and one leader." Ambrose Pinto, "The Propaganda Machinery of the Sangh Parivar," *Social Action*, Vol. 52, Jul.–Sep. 2002. p. 299.

³¹⁵ Op. cit., Mark T. B. Laing, 14.

³¹⁶ Op. cit., Mark T. B. Laing, 19.

³¹⁷ The Sangh Parivar consists of a group of organizations that are inspired by the goals of Hindu nationalism. It includes primarily the RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal, BJP and other sister organisations. This thesis uses the term 'Hindutva forces' interchangeably to refer to the Sangh Parivar.

resorted to the politics of exclusion and unrestrained violence against the people labelled as ‘minorities’ and not recognising their centuries-old heritage and inhabitancy. *Hindutva* forces have attempted to enforce the continued subjugation of hundreds of Dalit and tribal communities under the *Varma* system.³¹⁸

3.5 Hindu fundamentalist activities in Kandhamal, Odisha

Odisha merged as a majoritarian Hindu state between 1866 and 1936, combining its positions as the earliest linguistic province. The Orissa Prevention of Cow Slaughter Act, 1960, is deployed against Muslims and the Orissa Freedom of Religion Act, 1967, against Christians. The active Hinduisation of Hindus in Kandhamal has facilitated the Sangh Parivar to act with impunity since the 1960s.³¹⁹ There were around thirty active Sangh organisations in Odisha. The Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh had 171 trade unions. The Bharatiya Kisan Sangh had branches in 100 blocks. The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, the student’s wing, functioned in 299 colleges with 20,000 members. The Rashtriya Sevika Samiti, the women’s wing, had 80 centres.³²⁰ Lakshmanananda Saraswati, a VHP proselytiser, had been overseeing the Hinduisation in Kandhamal since 1969. Kandhamal witnessed *Hindutva*’s violence in 1986, followed by the Sangh Parivar’s growth in the area. The RSS established Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram³²¹ in 1987 and Nikhil Utkal Kui Samaj in different places of Kandhamal District. These Adivasi (tribal) organisations work among the tribals, particularly to promote Hindu rituals among them.³²²

In 1999, there was a severe cyclone attack on the coastal Odisha region that left more than 10,000 dead. During that time, the Sangh Parivar entered into approximately 12,000 impacted villages through sectarian relief work. It had about 40 major organisations with numerous branches including paramilitary hate campaign in 25 districts of Odisha.³²³ “Conscription into Hindu activism is coordinated through political reform, propaganda/thought control, cultural and religious interventions, developmental/social service and charitable work, sectarian health care, unionisation

³¹⁸ Ibid., 27.

³¹⁹ JPDC, ed. *Faith under Fire* (Delhi: Media House, 2008), 35.

³²⁰ Ibid., 198.

³²¹ “It is a social welfare organization works among the tribal people, founded in 1952 by R. K. Deshpande. Its aim is to counter Christian missionary schools in the tribal area.” Sanjeev Kelkar, *Lost Years of the RSS* (New Delhi: SAGE, 2011), 209.

³²² Op. cit., JPDC, 229.

³²³ Ibid., 36.

and revisionist education. The Sangh has inaugurated various trusts and branches of national and international institutions in Orissa to aid fund-raising.”³²⁴ The Sangh Parivar established spiritual centres in 780 villages and used religious scriptures to incite sectarianism among Hindus. They also created 1700 cultural reform centres aimed at Hindus and Christians.³²⁵

The RSS now operates through 6000 branch offices in Odisha with more than 1.5 lakh cadres. One of the RSS wings, *Vidya Bharati*, runs 391 schools in Odisha with 111,000 students preparing for future leadership. The *Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram* runs 1534 projects and schools in 21 Adivasi-populated districts. In March 2000, the BJP and Biju Janata Dal (BJD) formed a coalition government in Odisha. In October 2002, a Shiv Sena unit, which is a political party closely associated with the BJP that formed the first Hindu suicide squad in Balasore District.³²⁶ The Bajrang Dal organised ‘*trishul diksha*’ (trident distribution) campaigns in Banamalipur, Korda district for 5000 people in June 2003. They aimed at obtaining 150,000 members from the districts of Gajapati, Kandhamal, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Koraput and Nabarangpur.³²⁷

The RSS had for several years been trying to create a divide between the Adivasis and the Dalits. Swami Lakshmanananda had been backing the *Kui Samaj*’s demand for refusal of Schedule Tribe status to Pana Christian Dalits who had lost the right to reservation owing to their conversion. The strategy of *Hindutva* in Kandhamal was to polarise the Pana Dalits, and the Kond Adivasis begun to pay dividends. The visible attacks on Christian community started in 1996.

3.6 Conclusion

The long history of subjugation of Hindus in the northern parts of India and the conversion activities by Islam and Christianity became a threat to the Hindu religion. The refusal of the converts to do their menial work and the conversion of untouchables were also considered a threat to the Hindu society. Further, the British-dominant ideology of the colonial world and their language were understood as Christian. The Hindu ideology, culture, language and belief were considered immorality by Christians. In this context, Hindu religious fundamentalism emerged as Hindu nationalism in India.

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ Ibid., 205.

³²⁶ Ibid., 37.

³²⁷ Ibid., 203.

India had been ruled by many small and big rulers before the establishment of British India. Modern Hinduism was shaped by the Christian missionaries by considering that all local culture and literature was Hindu. The British Indian government considered and recorded all things indigenous to India as Hindu. The missionary publications labelled local religious writings as Hindu scriptures without considering their different sectarian origins. During the uprising of the freedom movement in the 1920s, the need for a change of identity from segmental to communal was felt in order to unite people against the British. The new identity given to the converts as Muslims, Christians and Sikhs were considered a threat to the identity of the locals. So, the dominant religious community capitalised on the British notion of Hinduism in order to keep their social hierarchy and political dominance by evolving as a majority community in India. Thus, all the indigenous groups of the Indian subcontinent came to be known as Hindus.

The Hindu religious fundamentalist organisations developed their ideologies on the basis of the Vedic period. The theory of ideology proposed by Terry Eagleton is well suited to the ideology of *Hindutva*. As Eagleton stated, *Hindutva* also has signs, meaning, beliefs, values and judgements related to the Hindu scriptures. Fundamentalism is not necessarily a religious construct alone. Hindu fundamentalism in India has its religious, cultural, ethnic and political aspects which are incorporated in it and manifested in all aspects of the Indian life situation. The states ruled by BJP are the experimental laboratory of *Hindutva* where the minority communities are harassed and freedom of religion is curtailed. It follows the fascist line of thought in trying to eliminate ones who are not with them.

Though organisations like Arya Samaj, the Ramakrishna Movement and Akhila Bharata Hindu Mahasabha had no direct link with Kandhamal district, the ideology of these organisations was carried by the RSS and VHP to the Kandhamal region and had a great impact on the people of Kandhamal. The RSS and BJP targeted the minority Christians in Kandhamal, Odisha. The rapid growth of Christianity created a threat to their agenda of creating a Hindu nation (Hindustan). From 1985 onwards, the violence against Christians increased and reached its peak in 2008.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE INDIAN CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO INDIAN NATIONALISM

4.1 Introduction

According to Indian history, the Christian gospel entered into Indian Territory in the very first century and churches were established by the Apostle Thomas. A church in Maliankara, Kerala State in South India claims that Thomas landed in a place called Cranganore in the West Coast of Kerala in 52 CE. He established seven churches before he moved on to the Eastern Coast where he died as a Martyr.³²⁸ Though there are a strong oral tradition and community evidence in favour of this history, scholars have a difference of opinion on the validity of the sources. The Venetian traveller Marco Polo, who visited South India in 1288 and again in 1292, noted a tomb reputed to be that of St. Thomas. It was a place of pilgrimage for both Christians and Muslims.³²⁹ It showed that the Christian community was present in the Indian Territory long before the Portuguese arrival to India in 1500.³³⁰ It is, therefore, European colonialism that created an identity problem for the Indian Christians. Robert De Nobili (1577–1656), an ordinary Jesuit priest, came to Southern India in 1605. He observed that in the perspective of the caste Hindus, Christianity was the religion of the ‘Franks’ or ‘Parangis’, the term used to denote especially the Portuguese, but also any kind of Europeans. It describes a person who is a meat-eater, wine-drinker, loose-living and arrogant in nature. For caste Hindus, these manners were not acceptable, so it was unthinkable for a Hindu to have a relationship with the Europeans.³³¹ The conversion of the lower castes to Christianity further confirmed the general feeling in India that Christianity was a religion good for *Parangis* and lower-caste people, but not for higher-caste Hindus.³³² When the Indian independence movement started at the beginning of the nineteenth century³³³ and in the light of the further development of

³²⁸ A. M. Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India: From the Beginning up to the Middle of the Sixteenth Century*, Vol. I (Bangalore: Church History Association of India, 1984), 29. Cf. V. Balakrishnan, *The History of the Syrian Christians of Kerala: A Critical Study* (Thrissur: Kerala Publications, 1999), 83.

³²⁹ M. K. Kuriakose, ed. *History of Christianity in India: Source Materials* (Madras: CLS, 1982), 1.

³³⁰ C. B. Firth, *An Introduction to Indian Church History* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2003), 52.

³³¹ Joseph Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India*, Vol. II (Bangalore: CHAI, 1982), 212. Cf. Stephen Neil, *A History of Christianity in India: The Beginning to AD 1707* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 280.

³³² P. Thomas, *Christian and Christianity in India and Pakistan* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1954), 63.

³³³ Chapter 2. 6

Indian nationalism, the Indian Christians felt that their Indian identity was questioned because Christianity was considered as colonial and foreign by the leaders of the independence movement. As a reaction against the given colonial and foreign identity, the Indian Christians formed their own Indian churches and missionary societies. The impact of Hindu Nationalism during the time of the independent movement was primarily felt by the Christian leaders in South India where the Christians were larger in number with prominent Christian leaders. The South Indian Christians began to respond to Hindu Nationalism by establishing indigenous Christian bodies: Indian missionary societies, Indian Churches and Ashrams. Later these models were adopted by the North Indian Christians.

4.2 The formation of National Churches

The foreign missionaries allowed the converts to worship together without caste and nationality discrimination, but the converts did not enjoy the equality and freedom of expression within the church.³³⁴ So, the converted Christians' search for an alternative identity and agenda found expression in the rise of independent churches. Further, the rise of nationalism and independence movement also motivated the Indian church leaders to form the National Churches.³³⁵ The Hindu-Christian Church of Lord Jesus and the National Church of India are the two examples of such churches.

4.2.1 The Hindu-Christian Church of Lord Jesus

There was a rapid and extensive growth of Christianity among the Shanar community in Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, South India from the beginning of the nineteenth century. The Shanars, who were considered as untouchables, suffered severe social disabilities and economic deprivation in the indigenous structure during that time. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they were the Palmyra climbers and the poorest of the poor. A large number of Shanars accepted Christianity. With the help of education and other philanthropic support provided by the missionaries, the Shanars progressed socially and economically by the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They adopted

³³⁴ M. S. S. Pandian, "Beyond colonial crumbs: Cambridge School identity, politics and Dravidian movements," *Economic Political Weekly*, Vol. XXX, No. 7 & 8, Feb. 18–25, 1995. P. 385–391.

³³⁵ Hugald Grafe, *History of Christianity in India: Tamil Nadu in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, Vol. IV part 2 (Bangalore: CHAI, 1990), 68.

the name Nadars as their caste. The Christian Nadars emerged as one of the caste groups who rose from untouchables to the higher strata of the society.³³⁶

Though the Nadars were in a position to challenge the caste structure of authority in the society, the European authority in the church was so dominant that they did not give proper recognition to the Nadar Christians in the church. The status of Nadar Christians within the church remained one of subordination and marginality.³³⁷ In the nationalist discourse, the converts were considered as a ‘denationalised’, ‘unpatriotic race’ for they had given up their ancient faith in preference to an alien one which aimed at destroying Hinduism and strengthening British imperialism.³³⁸ It was in this context, a Hindu–Christian Church of Lord Jesus was established in 1857, at Prakasapuram, Tirunelveli District, Tamil Nadu, South India by Arumainayagam *alias* Sattampillai.³³⁹

Sattampillai belonged to the Nadar caste inscribed Christianity as national by a process of incorporating indigenous practices as part of the church. He published in 1879 a series of questions addressed to European missionaries against Western Christianity.³⁴⁰ He blamed the missionaries for mixing European national traditions with Christianity. He warned them that they would be uprooted sooner or later from India if they continued in their ways. Embracing European Christianity by the Indians would lead to the destruction of social, moral and economic usage peculiar to Indians.³⁴¹ According to Sattampillai, each national group had scriptural sanction to observe its own respective national customs, just like the Jews had sanction for keeping and observance of their own national customs. One needs not abandon their hereditary good customs when they accept Christianity. He also introduced certain exclusive customs of Hindu nationality in the laws and forms of worship of the church.³⁴²

³³⁶ Ibid., 84.

³³⁷ Ibid., 85.

³³⁸ Y. Vincent Kumaradoss, “Negotiating colonial Christianity,” *South Indian Studies*, No. 1, Jan.–Jun. 1996. 35-53.

³³⁹ J. S. Ponnaiah, et al. *The Christians Community of Madura and Ramnad and Tinnevely* (Madurai: American College, 1938), 19-22.

³⁴⁰ Sattampillai, *A Brief Sketch of the Hindu Christian Dogmas* (Palayamkottai: Shanmuga Vilasam Press, 1890), 30.

³⁴¹ Ibid., 65.

³⁴² Ibid., 48.

4.2.2 The National Church of India

In the 1880s, an anti-missionary movement spread all over the Madras Presidency. It was generated by Hindu religious reform and revival movements. Christianity was accused of denationalising the converts and drawing them away from India's heritage. The converts were termed agents of imperialism. It was this trend of thinking that resulted in the rise of nationalism in India.³⁴³ The upper-caste converted Christians lost their social status and family ties, and they also faced persecution and economic deprivation. They were forced to share their identity with the low-caste converts in the church since the vast majority of the Christians were from the lower-caste groups.³⁴⁴ The foreign missionaries also failed to recognise the abilities and social status of the upper-caste converts and treated them like the lower-caste converts. They were not given the positions of trust and responsibility.³⁴⁵ In this background, the National Church of India was established in Madras on 12 September 1886 by Pulney Andy.³⁴⁶ He belonged to an affluent upper-caste Hindu family. He was the first Hindu from South India to earn a degree in medicine and became a member of the Royal College of Surgeons. He was baptised by a Basel Missionary at Calicut in May 1863. He was ostracised by his family for marrying an English lady and embracing Christianity. In the year 1883, he settled in Madras.³⁴⁷

Pulney Andy and his associates tried to keep the respectability of their social identity in the traditional order and the church, which were lost in the process of conversion. They also countered the accusation of losing their Indian identity due to their conversion. The major thrust of the National Church was to break with Western Christianity and its structure of missionary dominance in India. In order to counter the denationalising implication of Christianity on converts, they removed the Western cultural symbols and expressions of Christianity and replaced them by indigenous forms.³⁴⁸ As Pulney Andy wrote, "Christianity has been introduced by European agencies into this land with the main object of out-casting us and of disintegrating our

³⁴³ Samuel Sathianadhan, "The native Christian community in India: its position and prospects," *The Church Missionary Intelligencer*, Vol. XXV, Sep. 1900, 643.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁵ Samuel Sathianadhan, "Why do not more Indian graduates enter the Christian ministry?" *The Harvest Field*, Vol. IV, Jul. 1892, p. 93.

³⁴⁶ Roger E. Hedlund, *Christianity is Indian: The Emergence of an Indigenous Community* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2004), 12.

³⁴⁷ *The Christian Patriot*, Vol. XX, No. 39, Sep. 25, 1909, p. 3.

³⁴⁸ Pulney Andy, "The National Church of India," *The Christian Patriot*, Vol. VII, No. 7, Feb. 1890, 3.

social institutions in order that the rulers may succeed in obtaining entire political ascendancy over the country.”³⁴⁹ The church constituted by him was national because, for him, Christianity was not a foreign religion.

4.3 The development of indigenous missionary movements

Since the nationalist discourse and the independence movement suspected the loyalty of the Indian Christians to the nation, the Indian Christian leaders were compelled to respond to these allegations by rejecting foreign missionary activities. The formation of Indian missionary societies with the principles of self-governing, self-support and self-propagation of the gospel became the response to the allegations.

The Home Missionary Society was formed in 1900 by the pastors and local leaders of the London Mission Churches of the South Travancore Church Council at the time of their centenary celebration. The aim of the movement was to reach the people of other faith in South Travancore by their own resources and human power. They followed the three-fold formula of self-governing, self-support and self-propagation. Most of the workers were volunteers. They were successful in establishing many churches with new converts.³⁵⁰

Vedanayagam Samuel Azariah (1874–1945), the first South Indian Anglican bishop, formed the Indian Missionary Society (IMS) in 1903 at Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu with the principles of self-governing, self-support and self-propagation.³⁵¹ Azariah was recognised as one of the prominent nationalistic Christian leaders at that time.³⁵² The IMS is the pioneer indigenous missionary society in India. Now, it is functioning under the Diocese of Tirunelveli, Church of South India. At present, more than 800 missionaries are working all over India.

The spirit for evangelising the nation by the Indian Christians was high. Being mindful of the ongoing national sentiments of the people in the country, and also due to their national pride, the educated Indian Christians refused to work under the European missions. They were looking for an indigenous movement to work with.³⁵³

³⁴⁹ S. Pulney Andy, *Are Not Hindus Christians?* (Madras: Cosmopolitan Press, 1984), 80.

³⁵⁰ Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, Vol. VII (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing Home, 1971), 291.

³⁵¹ Joseph Abraham, *Fifty Years of the Indian Missionary Society of Tirunelveli (1903–1953)* (Palayamkottai: Diocesan Press, 1954), 4.

³⁵² D. Arthur Jeyakumar, *History of Christianity in India: Selected Themes* (Madurai: UYPA Press, 2000), 74.

³⁵³ Op. cit., Roger E. Hedlund, *Christianity is Indian...*, 219.

Having realised the need for a national indigenous missionary movement, 17 young Christian leaders from various parts of India came together in Serampore, West Bengal from 23 to 25 December 1905 to establish an interdenominational and indigenous missionary movement. They together formed the National Missionary Society of India (NMSI) with the support of mainline churches in India and supported by Indian resources. They also adopted the policy of self-governance, self-support and self-propagation.³⁵⁴

4.4 The formation of Indian churches

There was a sense of foreignness attached to Christians in India because of the European cultural influence and the denominational identity. The Reformed Churches in India had been trying their best to be Indian as well as Christian. The identity of the believing community must be expressed through its ecclesiology, and the community should be helped to deal with the social change that is inevitable. Identity based on the distinctiveness of a particular community is formed by marking its boundaries in order to be sustained and justified in the context of a worldview.³⁵⁵ Indian Christian leaders like Kali Charan Banerjee affirmed that “In having become Christians, we have not ceased to be Hindus. We have embraced Christianity but we have not discarded our nationality.”³⁵⁶ With this nationalistic discourse, the Church of South India was formed in 1947, and the Church of North India was formed in 1970.

4.4.1 The Church of South India

There was an informal meeting of Indian pastors of the Lutheran, Methodist, Anglican and South Indian United Churches (SIUC)³⁵⁷ convened in the year 1919 in Tranquebar, Tamil Nadu by Bishop V. S. Azariah and Rev. Santiago. They came out with a plan of union called the ‘Tranquebar Manifesto’. They formed a joint committee to carry out

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 220.

³⁵⁵ Dharendra Kumar Sahu, *United & Uniting: A Story of the Church of North India* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2001), xi.

³⁵⁶ *Church Missionary Intelligencer*, Vol. VII, London, 1871, 261.

³⁵⁷ “The South India United Church (SIUC) was formed with the Churches of Madura and Jaffna Missions, and those of the South India District Committee and the Travancore Mission of the London Missionary Society, in their organised capacity as ‘The United Churches of South India and Ceylon’ on the one part and the ‘Churches of the Arcot Mission of the Dutch Reformed Church and those of the United Free Church Mission of Madras in their organised capacity as The South India Synod of the Presbyterian Church’ on the other part. The first General Assembly of the South India United Church was held at Madras from 25 to 27 December 1908. The formation of this church was an important step in the development of Church Union Movement in India.” *The Report of the First General Assembly of SIUC* (Madras: Dec. 25–27, 1908), pp.3–4.

the actual negotiations of the Church Union. The first meeting of the joint committee took place in March 1920, followed by several meetings during the next 20 years.³⁵⁸

In February 1920, the Episcopal Synod of the Anglican Province in India appointed a committee for negotiation. In 1925, the Methodist Church of South India came into the negotiation, and it declared its willingness to unite with the other two churches in January 1943. In January 1945, the Anglicans passed a resolution to carry out the practical unanimous desire to enter into union with the Methodist and the SIUC. In September 1946, the SIUC accepted the proposal of unity. A year was spent in the final preparation for the union. On 27 September 1947, the Church of South India (CSI) was inaugurated in the St. George Cathedral at Madras.³⁵⁹

Thus, the churches in South India discarded their foreign denominational identity and took a new Indian identity.

4.4.2 The Church of North India

The Presbyterian and the Congregational churches in North India came together in 1924 and formed the United Church of North India (UCNI). In the same year, an invitation was sent out to other churches by the UCNI to be part of the union. The Wesleyan Methodist Church responded to the invitation immediately. There was a Round-Table Conference (RTC) arranged at Lucknow in 1929 with the Wesleyan Methodist Church delegates to discuss about the possibility of Church Union. Subsequently, several RTCs took place for detailed discussions. In 1939, the RTC prepared a document called 'Basis of Negotiation' and publicised it for further negotiation. Meanwhile, the Methodist Church in South Asia (MCSA) also expressed its willingness to be part of the Church Union in 1929. The UCNI and the Methodist Church in South Asia together formed a Joint Council for their negotiation. The Joint Council continued its discussions from 1931 to 1945 in a separate platform.³⁶⁰

In 1951, the UCNI, the British and Australian Methodist Church, the Anglican Church of India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon (CIPBC), the Council of the Baptist Churches in North India and the Methodist Church in Southern Asia (MCSA) jointly

³⁵⁸ Rajaia D. Paul, *Ecumenism in Action* (Madras: CLS, 1972), 5.

³⁵⁹ Isaac Devadoss, "A Historical Survey of Ecumenism in India," in the *Ecumenism in India Today*, edited by James Massey (Bangalore: BETESSC/SATHARI, 2008), 20.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

formed a Negotiation Committee (NC) replacing the RTC and met in Calcutta. They proposed a plan of Church Union in North India. The Disciples of Christ and the Church of the Brethren also joined in the negotiation from 1957 onwards. They had several meetings and reached the fourth and final edition of the plan of union in 1965.³⁶¹

In 1966, the General Council of the CIPBC decided to join the proposed Church of North India (CNI) based on the union plan of 1965. In 1968, the UCNI General Assembly decided to join the union. In 1969, The Methodist Church (British and Australian Conference) also declared its willingness to accept the 1965 plan of union. In the same year, the Convention of the Churches of the Disciples of Christ also decided to join the plan of union. In 1969, the Church of Brethren also decided to join the union. It was unfortunate that the Methodist Church in Southern Asia rejected the plan to join the CNI on 6 August 1970. Finally, the Church of North India (CNI) was inaugurated on 29 November 1970 in the All Saints' Cathedral Compound at Nagpur.³⁶² These six denominational churches joined together and gave up their foreign identity to form an Indian church with an Indian identity.

4.5 Development of Indian Christian theologies

Indian religions and cultures were considered as evil and suppressed by the colonial powers. On the other hand, the elite Hindu fundamentalists were promoting their ideology of Hindu nationalism along with independence movement. Indian Christian theology emerged in the context of raising this Hindu nationalism. This emergence of Indian Christian theology was an attempt to make the Christian faith more indigenous, intelligible and acceptable to caste Hindus. Indian Christian leaders showed their commitment to nation-building by promoting education to all and involved themselves in philanthropic works. A Theology of Dialogue was developed to express Christians' respect for the other religions and willingness to work together in common ground. This was also the response to the challenge posed by the emergence of *Hindutva* as a major political force by Indian Christian theologians.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² Ibid., 23. Cf. *Forward to Union: The Church of North India* (Delhi: L.P.H and I.S.P.C.K, 1968), 3.

4.5.1 Theology of dialogue

Stanley Jedidiah Samartha³⁶³ (1920–2001), an Indian Christian theologian from Karnataka State, South India, was appointed as an Associate Secretary in the Department of Studies in Mission and Evangelism of World Council of Churches (WCC). He published a book titled *One Christ, Many Religions: Towards a Revised Christology* (1991), in which he expresses his theology. He proposed the Theology of Dialogue in the context of Indian religions and cultures which were suppressed by the colonial power. He appreciated Indian multi-religious communities for overcoming the difficulties of living together by creating a common ground to build and share their lives as a society. He felt that the churches in India had identified itself with the Western Church. He wanted to distance the churches in India from the colonial power and prove itself as Indian by its commitment to nation-building.³⁶⁴

Samartha's Theology of Dialogue was an outcome of his Indian experience of communalism. The purpose of the dialogue was to bring religious harmony and make the people of different religions live together harmoniously. For Samartha, the dialogue was not simply a method or a philosophy but a mood, a spirit, and an attitude of commitment to one's own religion coupled with an openness to those of others. He urged the Indian Christians to get involved in politics so that they could be part of the political decision-making. He emphasised the 'relative distinctiveness' of Jesus Christ rather than His 'uniqueness'. In the 1980s, there was a growing politicisation of Hinduism by propagating *Hindutva* which Samartha regarded as an illegitimate politicisation of the religion. He advocated that the main task of the Indian churches was to supply the spiritual resources to undergird the struggle for justice.³⁶⁵

4.5.2 Theology of transformation

C. V. Mathew, an Indian Christian theologian, described political Hinduism (*Hindutva*) as a 'revivalist-rational nativist movement' developed from the combined effects of the

³⁶³ "S. J. Samartha was awarded a PhD in 1951 from Hartford Theological Seminary. In 1952, he was appointed as the Principal of the Basel Evangelical Mission Theological Seminary at Mangalore. During his time in WCC, he paved the way for the formulation of the guidelines for inter-religious dialogue which became valid foundation for the continuing work." S. J. Samartha, *One Christ, Many Religions: Towards a Revised Christology* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991).

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 24. Cf. Kirsteen Kim, *Mission in the Spirit: The Holy Spirit in Indian Christian Theologies* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2003), 49.

³⁶⁵ Stanly J. Samartha, *Courage for Dialogue: Ecumenical Issues in Inter-Religious Relationships* (Geneva: WCC, 1981), 81. Cf. Op. cit., Stanly J. Samartha, 69.

Western colonial rule, Christian missionary enterprises and Indian church growth. The concessions extended to the Christians for being a minority community resulted in Hindu exclusiveness, militancy and missionary zeal among the Hindus. Hinduism is as much as missionary religion likes Christianity, Islam and Buddhism. The mission of any religion necessarily implies conversion.³⁶⁶ The missionary nature of Hinduism in its expression in *Hindutva* to create a unitive and homogeneous Hindu nation in India was aggressive in its methods, which was both dangerous to the democratic fabric of the country and threatening to the other religious traditions. The *Hindutva* ideology is politically motivated and grows rapidly by threatening the minorities through violence in India. The churches in India must learn from the early church's experience. Persecution is part of Christianity throughout history. Persecution will result in joy, prayers and unity, purifying the church and strengthen the witness of the church. This understanding of transformation will strengthen the Indian Christians to face the hard reality of *Hindutva* in India.³⁶⁷ Mathew's theology of transformation is trying to strengthen the faith of the church and encourage them to face the challenges with boldness.

4.5.3 Theology of inculturation

Indian Christian theology is shaped by the two major realities of India, that of growing Hindu nationalism, on the one hand, and poverty, on the other. Indian theologians give importance to inculturation and liberation. Vandana Mataji (1921–2013), a convert from the Parsi community and a leader of the Society of the Sacred Heart, represented the inculturation. She was disturbed by the foreignness of Indian churches and inspired by Abhishiktananda (1910–1973), a French monk who lived as a Hindu *sannyasi* – Abhishiktananda recognised Hindu mystical traditions and compared with Jesus' experience of 'Being with the Father'. It was equivalent to the Hindu realisation of the non-duality of reality.³⁶⁸ To experience this mystical Hindu tradition, Vandana lived in Hindu ashrams for some time and founded her own as a way of living her religious life in a more authentic Indian way. She asserted the equivalence of Hinduism and Christianity and the convergence of all religions towards a common core. According to

³⁶⁶ C. V. Mathew, ed. *Jubilee Reflection: Essays on Selected Theological issues* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2000), 13.

³⁶⁷ C.V. Mathew, *The Saffron Mission: A Historical Analysis of Modern Hindu Missionary Ideologies and Practices* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1999), 111.

³⁶⁸ Vandana Mataji, *Gurus, Ashrams and Christians* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1988), 14.

Mataji, “The ultimate goal of the religions is the spiritual union with God.”³⁶⁹ She wore the saffron robes of a *sannyasini* and spent several years in Sivananda Ashram (Divine Life Society). She promoted ‘Ashramic Spirituality’ as a non-proselytising form of Christian witness. She believed that one can practise one’s faith in a Hindu way without conversion. According to Vandana, *Hindutva* does not represent the true spirit of Hinduism. She demonstrated against *Hindutva* violence using non-violent Hindu method.³⁷⁰

4.5.4 Theology of liberation

Samuel Rayan, a Catholic Indian theologian, advocated the theology of liberation during the 1970s in the Indian context. According to Rayan, Christianity had to have an explicit political agenda to bring about structural changes in society for the sake of the poor. The church had to be a social movement that promoted a Eucharistic sharing of the resources of the Earth. He regarded Brahminical Hinduism as irredeemably oppressive and preferred to use the symbols of grass-roots Indian religious traditions.³⁷¹ Christians had to live and practice Jesus’ socially involved spirituality. Christian missions had to work for social justice in India. For him, the conversion of the Dalits was a common struggle against the social injustices of Indian society. He expressed that the conversion of Dalits was political rather than religious. Religion had to stand for justice. He emphasised the need for all parties to recognise the otherness of the other and the need to make room for particular religious expressions. He expressed that if the so-called Christian nations were on the side of dictatorships, accumulation of wealth, military power and economic exploitation, ignoring the cry of hunger and oppressed of the nations, Hindus would regard Christians as a harmful presence in India and they would not listen to the Christian message.³⁷²

4.5.5 Theology of pluralistic inclusivism

The Indian context is pluralistic not only with regard to religious faith and traditions but also to culture, language, ideologies, practices and race. But the major problem of India is religious communalism and politicisation of religion with communal politics, which affects to a large extent the harmonious life of the country and peaceful

³⁶⁹ Op. cit., Mark T. B. Laing, 170.

³⁷⁰ Vandana Mataji, ed. *Christian Ashrams – A Movement with a Future?* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1993), 41.

³⁷¹ Samuel Rayan, “How will the Hindu hear?” *IRM*, 71/281 (Jan 1982), 51 (49–59).

³⁷² S Arokiasamy, ed. *Responding to Communalism* (Gujarat: Sahitya Prakash, 1991), 49.

coexistence of people belonging to various faiths and ideologies. Religion became the tool of communal politics in the hands of some political parties.³⁷³ In this context, K. P. Aleaz advocated ‘pluralistic inclusivism’ through his writings, as an alternative model to the Western approaches in the Indian religious pluralistic setting. “Religious pluralism is part of the larger plurality of races, peoples, cultures, social structures, economic systems, political patterns, languages and symbols.”³⁷⁴ Pluralism is an approach consisting of relating various faiths in a community which is distinctively different to that of traditional attitudes of ‘exclusivism and inclusivism’. Pluralism accepts the reality of a plurality of religions and acknowledges that other religions too have their own salvific paths to reach the ultimate reality. Exclusivism claims that one’s own religion is ‘superior’ to other people’s religion. Inclusivism applies to prove the worthiness of one’s own faith and unworthiness of others.³⁷⁵ According to K. P. Aleaz,

In pluralistic inclusivism, both inclusivism and pluralism undergo a change in their previous meanings. It makes pluralism inclusive and inclusivism pluralistic. Pluralistic inclusivism is an attempt to make Christian faith pluralistically inclusive i.e., the content of the revelation of God in Jesus is to become truly pluralistic by other faiths contributing to it as per the requirement of different places and times and it is through such pluralistic understanding of the gospel that its true inclusivism is to shine forth.³⁷⁶

Pluralistic inclusive spirituality is neither against one’s own faith commitment nor does it compromises with others’ faiths, but it promotes a sense of respect to others’ commitments to their respective faith while recognising the reality of a plurality of religions from ‘inclusive pluralistic’ point of view.³⁷⁷

4.6 The Ashram Movement

The word *asrama* is derived from the Sanskrit root *sram*, to exert oneself. It means a place where severities are practiced, a heritage.³⁷⁸ The first ashrams were founded in the Vedic times (3000 BCE). The ashrams lost their prominence from the beginning of

³⁷³ Israel Selvanayagam, ed. *Multi-Faith Context of India: Resources and Challenges for Christians* (Bangalore: BTTBPSA, 1994), 1.

³⁷⁴ Stanley J. Samartha, *One Christ – Many Religions* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 4.

³⁷⁵ V.J. John, ed. *Many Ways of Pluralism* (Kolkata: ISPCK & Bishop’s College, 2010), 131.

³⁷⁶ K. P. Aleaz, “Pluralistic inclusivism: a viable Indian theology of religions,” *Asian Journal of Theology*, Vol. 12, No. 2, Dec. 1998, 268. (265-288).

³⁷⁷ K. P. Aleaz, “Indian contribution to a spirituality of pluralism,” *Journal of Contextual Theology*, Vol. 2, No. 1, May 2008, 74 (74-90).

³⁷⁸ Op. cit., Vandana Mataji, ed. *Christian Ashrams...*, 4.

the twelfth century when Muslims invaded Indian territories, followed by the Europeans from the beginning of the sixteenth century. Sri Rama Krishna Paramahansa (1836–1886), a Hindu mystic, claimed to have different mystical experiences through different religious traditions (including Islam and Christianity) and promoted the equality and complementary nature of different religions. In 1899, Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902), a disciple of Rama Krishna, founded a monastic community at Belur near Kolkata called Rama Krishna Math and gave an organisational structure.³⁷⁹ Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869–1948), later Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation of India, established the Satyagraha Ashram on 25 May 1915 at Ahmedabad, Gujarat. He integrated both old and new elements of ashram. In 1906, Gandhi decided to take the vow of celibacy which was accepted by his wife Kasturbai. Apart from prayers and devotions, Gandhi encouraged the members of the Satyagraha Ashram to work for the development of the nation. Spinning yarn was the regular work for the inmates.³⁸⁰ Others also started ashrams in different parts of the country with more or less similar principles.

4.6.1 Christian Ashram Movement

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the independence movement was on the rise and Gandhi also started his ashram with certain Christian principles which challenged the Christian missionaries who gave importance to Western culture and English education. There was a habit of Christian missionaries to think of indigenous Christianity where Indian tradition and culture would be adopted. There was a tendency within the Indian Christian community for a Christian Ashram Movement to counter the Westernisation of the Indian churches and to encourage the Indian Christians to keep their Indian identity by giving importance to their own tradition and culture.³⁸¹ The rise of national consciousness could not avoid making an impact on the Indian Christians who were becoming more conscious of their Indian heritage, along with their Hindu counterpart. The Gandhian revolution and the end of the First World War had affected Indians of all religious backgrounds who had begun to see British rule not only alien but incapable of reform. Christians of the educated classes thus became more nationalist than they had been before. So, they began to look for alternative Christianity

³⁷⁹ Gwilym Beckerlegge, *The Ramakrishna Mission: The Making of the Modern Hindu Movement* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 130.

³⁸⁰ Savita Singh, *Satyagraha* (New Delhi: Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, 2016), 106.

³⁸¹ Op. cit., Roger E. Hedlund, ed. *Christianity is Indian...*, 132.

which may help them to follow Christ with their own Indian identity, based on their own tradition and culture. Even foreign missionaries started ashrams in order to communicate the gospel more effectively to the caste Hindus in India.³⁸²

4.6.2 Roman Catholic ashrams

Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya (1861–1907), a young man from Bengal, joined the Brahma Samaj. In February 1891, he received baptism in the Anglican Church, but in September, he joined the Catholic Church. He opened an ashram in the beginning of 1899 near Jabalpur on the bank of the river Narmada.³⁸³

Abbe Monchanin (1895–1957), a French missionary, and Fr. Henri Le Saux (1910–1973), a French Benedictine monk, had a passionate interest in *advaitic* experience. They founded the Saccidananda Ashram in Shantivanam in Kulitalai, a village on the bank of the river Kaveri in Tamil Nadu. Monchanin took the name Swami Parama Arubi Anandam and Le Saux, Abhishiktananda. Both felt that contemplation and its structured form of monasticism were the best means of entering into dialogue with Hinduism and of manifesting the spiritual nature of the Catholic Church in India.³⁸⁴ Cistercian monk Fr. Francis Mathew (1912 b), a Belgian monk, later known as Francis Acharya and Fr. Bede Griffiths (1906 b), a Benedictine monk from England, established an ashram in Kurisumala, Kerala in 1958. Fr. D. S. Amalorpavadass (1932–1990) opened the Anjali Ashram on 15 August 1979, at the feet of the Chamundi Hills of Mysore, Karnataka.³⁸⁵

4.6.3 The Protestant ashrams

In 1917, under the leadership of Narayan Vaman Thilak, the first Protestant Ashram was started at Sathara in Maharashtra. This ashram was named as Iswar Darbar (Royal Court of God). Following this, many ashrams were established, Christhukula Ashram

³⁸² Bede Griffiths, *Christian Āshram, Essays towards a Hindu-Christian Dialogue* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), 70.

³⁸³ Animananda, *Swami Upadhyay Brahmabandhab: A Story of His Life*, Part I (Calcutta, 1908), 13. Cf. Julius J. Lipner, *Brahmabandhal Upadhyay: The Life and Thought of a Revolutionary* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 16.

³⁸⁴ Jules Monchanin and Le Saux, Henri, *An Indian Benedictine Āshram* (Kulitalai: Saccidananda Āshram, 1951), 5.

³⁸⁵ Catholic Ashrams, “Adopting and adapting; reconciliation is underway, but serious obstacles remain in the dialogue between two great faith,” <https://www.hinduismtoday.com/modules/smartsection/item.php?itemid=396>. Accessed on 23/05/2018.

(1921) at Thirupathur, Tamil Nadu; Krishuprema Ashram (1928) at Pune, Maharashtra; Krishudasa Ashram (1930) at Palakkad, Kerala; Christian Ashram (1930), Sattal, Uttarakhand; Christava Ashram (1935) at Manganam, Kerala; and Mar Thoma Ashram (1942) at Sihora, Madhya Pradesh.³⁸⁶ During the time of Indian missionary movement, the Christian ashrams had a major role to play. Ajith Kumar started Kristukripa Ashram at Kattakkada in 1993 with the motto of ‘Giving Living Water in Indian Cup’. This had become a milestone in the reformation of the Neo Christian Ashram Movement in India. Following this, he had started ashrams at Nagpur (2002), Maharashtra, and Chidambaram (2009), Tamil Nadu. These ashrams became centres to promote Indian spirituality, social service, inter-religious dialogue, contemplation, multi-religious community, liberation of the poor and ecumenism.³⁸⁷

4.7 The political response

*Hindutva*³⁸⁸ is an infusion of Brahminical Hinduism with nationalism, i.e., politics of Hindu religious nationalism and the movement for Hindu *Rashtra* (Kingdom). The politics and ideology of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) are spreading at a faster pace. It has reached its crucial stage with its control over the state apparatus. Further, it will consolidate its position and will try to control every sphere of civil society.³⁸⁹ The Roman Catholic Bishop Aloysius Paul D’Souza appealed to the Christian community in India while addressing the Christian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in October 2003 that “Christians should not watch with complacency the changing national, state and local politics, but take keen interest in it in order to assert Christian identity and secure rights to live with human dignity.”³⁹⁰ Creation of political awareness among people is the duty of the church. Without political participation in all levels, the church cannot enter into society. On 22 February 2014, Christian leaders from the State of Andhra Pradesh launched a national political party at Hyderabad called Indian Christian Secular Party (ICSP) to fight for the Indian Christians’ right.³⁹¹

³⁸⁶ Roger E. Hedlund, ed. *Christianity Is Indian: The Emergence of an Indigenous Community* (Delhi: ISPCK and MIIS, 2004), 137.

³⁸⁷ “Protestant Ashrams,” <http://ourkabooks.blogspot.com/2013/03/protestant-ashrams.html>. Accessed on 23/05/2018.

³⁸⁸ Chapter 3.3.5.1

³⁸⁹ Pralay Kanungo, *RSS’s Tryst with Politics: From Hedgewar to Sudarshan* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2002), 283.

³⁹⁰ Op. cit., Mark T. B. Laing, ed., *Nationalism and Hindutva...*, 179.

³⁹¹ Ch Shusil Rao, “New political party launched in Hyderabad,” *Times of India* (22/02/2014). <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/hyderabad/New-political-party-launchedinHyderabad/articleshow/30853956.cms>. Accessed on 25/05/2018.

4.8 Multiculturalism

The *Hindutva*' sideology of a national culture is a manufactured culture built around Indian Brahmanical male norms. The very idea of Ram Raj as a symbol of national identity, ban on cow slaughter, and imposition of Sanskrit as a compulsory language shows that the Sangh Parivar wants to homogenise the culture through political impositions. It is demanding a cultural homogeneity by subjugating the culture of Adivasis, Dalits and other subaltern sections of society.³⁹² Christianity must protect other cultures and peoples; otherwise, they will also be trapped in the mono-cultural campaign. The critique of *Hindutva* on Christianity is a critique of the colonial face of the Christian communities in India. Indian Christian identity must be deeply rooted in Indian culture. Christian faith in Jesus Christ should be an invitation to perceive the Divine Word and Divine Spirit in India's religious-cultural realities. The church should incorporate Indian traditions, customs, art and festivals. The interaction between gospel and culture should continue, keeping the goal of transforming society with love and justice. The symbols that the Indian Christians choose should be in line with the other religions of India. At the same time, the Christian spirit, meaning and identity should be maintained. Indian Christians should put their emphasis on Indian ethos and values.³⁹³ Multiculturalism emphasises the importance of cultural belonging and legitimatises the desire to maintain difference. The Indian Christians should be fully Indian and fully Christian, open to the stirring of the spirit and respectful of diversity and primitive of community.³⁹⁴ Indian Christian theologians assert that all efforts should be made to counteract the trend of homogenising culture by upholding the universal values of truthfulness, justice, equanimity, equality, non-violence, love and compassion.

4.9 Promoting humanistic nationalism

Hindutva promotes religious nationalism which does not allow pluralism and differences. Secularism certainly upholds plurality of cultures and religions, and acceptance of different identities, and it also gives space to marginalised groups to assert their role in the nation-building. But the secular ideology rejects religion to

³⁹² Ram Puniyani, *Communal Politics: Facts versus Myths* (New Delhi: Sage Publication, 2003), 220.

³⁹³ L. Stanislaus and Alwyn D'Souza, eds. *Prophetic Dialogue: Challenges and Prospects in India* (New Delhi: Ishvani/ISPCK, 2003), 97.

³⁹⁴ Leonard Fernando, ed. *Seeking New Horizons* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2002), 139.

operate in the stream of the society, because of the public–private distinction.³⁹⁵ Since secularism does not recognise religion, it is not able to tap the humanistic message of the religions. The Indian Christian response to *Hindutva* is to strengthen humanistic nationalism. The Christians should assert their national identity and value every human being irrespective of their religious affiliation. The church can promote humanistic nationalism by establishing justice, equality and fellowship.³⁹⁶

4.10 Conclusion

Christianity established in India from the very beginning of the first century, but it was confined to one particular area for centuries. Only when Europeans came to India after the fifteenth century, Christianity began to spread all over Indian Territories; thus, it took Western colonial identity. The convert Indian Christians struggled to identify themselves with the Europeans because of the Western cultural influence. Reactions from other local religious traditions also gave pressure on the Indian Christians by alienating them from families and societies. From the beginning, the Indian Christians were struggling to maintain their Indian identity. The nationalistic movement paved the way to form the Indian National Churches and mission theologies in order to prove their Indian identity. When the political ideology of *Hindutva* began to rise up and questioned the identity of the Indian Christians, the Indian Christians seriously thought about making Christianity as Indian by removing Western elements and incorporating Indian traditions and customs. The Hindu Nationalism shaped Christianity as an Indian religion.

³⁹⁵ Op. Cit., Mark T. B. Laing, ed. *Nationalism and Hindutva...*, 185.

³⁹⁶ Felix Wilfred, “Nationalism in a New Avatar and Challenges to Christianity,” *Vaiharai*, 6/3 & 4 (2001), 120.

CHAPTER FIVE
RELIGIOUS COMMUNAL VIOLENCE IN INDIA
FROM 1985 TO 2010

5.1 Introduction

Religious communal violence has become a regular feature of Indian social life. From 1961 onwards, the country has experienced a number of severe riots and dramatic events. In 1964, there was violence in different cities like Calcutta, Rourkela and Jamshedpur following the theft of a relic hair of the Prophet in Kashmir. There was a large retaliatory pogrom against Muslims in Ahmedabad in 1969, and terrible riots in Bhiwandi, Mumbai in 1970 and Jamshedpur in 1979, as well as certain incidents in Hyderabad. There was an uncontrolled violence at Moradabad in 1980 and Biharsharif in 1981, and there were massacres at Nellie in 1983 and again riots in Bhiwandi, Mumbai in 1984. During that period, the Muslim minority was not happy with the Indian secular ideal, while a growing proportion of the Hindu population was inclined to the *Hindutva* ideology of the Indian nation.³⁹⁷

In 1989, as the country was preparing for the ninth general elections, indicative signs detrimental to the secular fabric of India were observed. The Muslims were too much determined to defend their personal laws, which were under attack from all quarters. The dispute over the Babri Masjid site in Ayodhya was getting worse by the day, and it became a matter of national concern, creating division between the two communities all over India.³⁹⁸ This issue is related to the disputed land in Ayodhya which is claimed by the Hindus as the birthplace of Lord Rama, on which very site of the Masjid built by a Muslim ruler Babar in 1529, called Babri Masjid.³⁹⁹ This chapter is an attempt to record the religious communal violence that took place during this period, mainly between the Hindus and the Muslims. Some of the pre-planned attacks

³⁹⁷Asghar Ali Engineer, "Bombay-Bhiwandi riots in national political perspective," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 19, No. 29, Jun. 21, 1984. p. 1136. Cr; Asghar Ali Engineer, "Ten days that shook Bombay Bhiwandi: an analysis of events," <http://www.csss-islam.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Bhiwandi-riots-analysis-Communal-Riots-in-Post-Independence-India-1.pdf>. Accessed on 09/10/2018.

³⁹⁸ Veena Das, *Mirrors of Violence: Communities, Riots and Survivors in South Asia* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), 21.

³⁹⁹ Ashok Ghowgule, *Hindutva and the Religious Minorities* (Mumbai: Hindu Vivek Kendra, 1997), 3.

on Christians as well as the political background of the periods are also briefly explained.

5.2 Riots before the 1989 general election

In the 1984 general elections, the BJP won only two Lok Sabha seats. The leaders of the BJP felt that they were not aggressive enough to stimulate the majority Hindus' sentiments to support their *Hindutva* ideology. They adopted a more aggressive strategy than before. They revived *Ratha Yatras* (Chariot Processions) in order to attract people. It was a revival of an old Hindu tradition, wherein processions were organised to interweave large regions, seldom the whole country, thus inducing deep emotions on the part of Hindus and its devotees.⁴⁰⁰ On the other hand, the Muslims had a new leadership, who was more vigorous than the earlier one. There were some irresponsible cleric and several outspoken politicians who provoked the sentiments of the majority Hindu community that added fuel to the misunderstanding and confrontations between the two communities.⁴⁰¹

The Rajiv Gandhi government was entangled in a serious crisis with the Bofors Armament scandal. The general elections were announced to be held in November 1989. Meanwhile, the Muslims violently protested against Salmon Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*. Though the book was banned by the then government, the period was by and large disturbed by incessant protests and rallies from the Muslim side. On the other hand, there was pressure growing from the *Ramjanmabhoomi* (Birthplace of Lord Ram) movement for the construction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya. Big *yatras* (processions) were organised with the goal of reaching 500,000 villages of India. Every village was expected to send or carry a sacred brick for the construction of a redoubtable Ram temple. With much hesitation, the government gave permission for the processions. As a result, there were riots in different cities in this connection.⁴⁰²

The city of Meerut (Uttar Pradesh) consisted of 61% Hindus and 36% Muslims. On 14 February 1986, the Muslims protested against the unlocking of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya (Uttar Pradesh). The shops belonging to the Hindus were set on fire, leading to a riot. On 14 April 1987, a riot broke out at the time of the Muslim festival of *Shab-*

⁴⁰⁰ Christophe Jaffrelot, "The Hindu nationalist reinterpretation of pilgrimage in India: The limits of yatra politics," *Nations and Nationalism*, No. 15 (1), Jan. 2009. p. 12.

⁴⁰¹ Asghar Ali Engineer, "Communal riots before, during and after lok sabha elections," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 26, No. 37, Sep. 1991. p. 2136.

⁴⁰² Op. cit., Christophe Jaffrelot, "The Hindu nationalist...", p. 13.

e-barat (the night of freedom) in which 10 people were killed. On 16 May of the same year, a Hindu was killed due to a banal land dispute which sparked off an extensive rioting. On 18 May, violence erupted when some antisocial elements set a Muslim's stage on fire in the Muslim-majority neighbourhood of Hashimpura. In retaliation, a Hindu shop was attacked by the Muslims and its owner was killed. The police and the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) were deployed in that area. It was the time of Ramzan (Ramadan), and Muslims were celebrating Iftar. There was a clash between PAC and the Muslims, as they pelted stones at the police. The furious Muslims started attacking Hindus. About 10–12 people (both Hindus and Muslims) were burned alive inside the factory of Pillokhdi. On 19 May, curfew was declared. Hindu activists looted and burned parts of the city in spite of the presence of PAC. About 33 poor Muslims were blazed to death, particularly in the area of Shastri Nagar.⁴⁰³

The city of Delhi consisted of 81% Hindus and 12% Muslims. The rumours about incidents in Meerut stimulated communal violence in Delhi. On 19 May 1987, an imam of a mosque in the Hauz Khaz area was killed by a Hindu mob. Immediately, a curfew was imposed and lifted again on 22 May for prayers since it was the last day of Ramzan. After prayer, the mobs from the Jama Masjid and the Fatehpuri Masjid started violence and went on a rampage. About 15 people died on that day.⁴⁰⁴

There were 52% Hindus and 29% Muslims living together in the city of Aurangabad. In May 1988, after the Municipal Corporation election of Aurangabad (Maharashtra) troubles started in the city and in nearby villages. Bal Thackeray, a right-wing political party leader of the Shiv Sena, arranged for a rally and public meeting in the town to secure victory for his party. But the Congress candidate won with the support of the Muslim League and the Dalits. The Shiv Sena party could not accept the defeat, so they filed a petition in the high court challenging the result of the elections. On 16 May 1988, a day before the Muslim festival of Eid al Fitr began, the court hearing came and people gathered in large numbers in front of the courthouse. A Shiv Sena mob resorted to violence and began to loot and burn parts of the city. A section of

⁴⁰³Asghar Ali Engineer, "Gian Prakash committee report on Meerut riots," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 23, No. 2/9, Jan. 2-9, 1988. p. 31.

⁴⁰⁴Asghar Ali Engineer, "Old Delhi in Grip of Communal Frenzy," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 22, No. 26, Jun. 27, 1987. p. 1022.

Muslims countered the Sena. The riots continued till 20 May 1988. According to newspaper reports, the riot claimed 26 lives.⁴⁰⁵

The population of the Muzaffarnagar city consisted of 58% Hindus and 40% Muslims. On 8 October 1988, the Hindu communal organisations called for a *bandh* (general strike) to counter the rally that was organised by the Babri Masjid Action Committee (BMAC) on 14 October 1988. Muslim shopkeepers refused to close their shops, and violence burst out. One Muslim was stabbed, and the Hindus' shops were torched. On 11 October, a Muslim peace committee was formed and a demonstration organised in the town. The Shiv Sena also organised a procession; the two crowds met and started fighting. According to official accounts, about 35 people, mainly poor rickshaw-pullers, were killed. There were 60 Muslims and 27 Hindus died during the clash.⁴⁰⁶

The city population of Bombay (renamed as Mumbai) had 67% Hindus and 19% Muslims. On 24 February 1989, the Iranian President Ayatollah Khomeini declared that the author Salman Rushdie should be put to death for having published the book *The Satanic Verses*. A group of Muslims in Bombay organised a *bandh*.⁴⁰⁷ The young people associated with Islamic organisations actively participated. There was a procession organised by the Muslims from the area of Mohammed Ali Road; during the procession, the police tried to disperse the crowd which ended up in violence. Eleven people lost their lives in that clash.⁴⁰⁸

Kota is a city in the State of Rajasthan where 79% Hindus and 16% Muslims lived together. A riot took place on 14 September 1989, on the occasion of Hindu *Anant Chaturdashi*⁴⁰⁹ procession. The procession marched through the town shouting slogans against Muslims. The procession was stopped near a mosque in the Ghantaghar area which resulted in violence. Muslim business people were targeted. Government record

⁴⁰⁵ *The Times of India*, 27/05/1988. Cf. Asghar Ali Engineer, "Aurangabad riots: part of Shiv Sena's political strategy," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 23, No. 24, Jun. 11, 1988. p. 1203.

⁴⁰⁶ Asghar Ali Engineer, "Communal riots in Muzaffar Nagar, Khatauli and Aligarh," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 24, No. 1, Jan. 07, 1989. p. 23.

⁴⁰⁷ Asghar Ali Engineer, "Anti-Rushdie disturbances in Bombay," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 24, No. 10, Mar. 11, 1989. p. 492.

⁴⁰⁸ Amrita Shah, "The seeds of suspicion," *The Illustrated Weekly*, Mar. 19, 1989. p. 32.

⁴⁰⁹ Held on the last day of the Ganesh festival; when Ganesh idols are immersed in lakes or rivers.

showed 21 deaths, but *Tulu-e-Subh*, an Urdu newspaper, reported that 26 persons were killed in the riot – 22 Muslims and 4 Hindus.⁴¹⁰

There were 56% Hindus and 43% Muslims living in the town of Badaun, Uttar Pradesh. Tension arose over the issue of Urdu being made Uttar Pradesh's second official language. On 27 September 1989, the All India Students' Council and Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) organised a rally in the town against the implementation of Urdu as the second official language. On 28 September, the bill for implementing Urdu as the second official language was passed in the state's Legislative Assembly. The Islamia Inter College students organised a march in support of the bill and attacked a Hindu college, which led to a riot. About 200 shops were gutted and places of worship damaged. According to the media report, there were 27 people died in the riot. A violent mob attacked the Kasganj Kashipur train in which 13 passengers were killed.⁴¹¹

Indore had 81% Hindus and 13% Muslims. On 4 October 1989, a Ram Shila *Yatra* was organised by the Hindu organisations. The devotees were bringing consecrated bricks to build the proposed Ram temple in Ayodhya during the procession. About 25,000 men and women participated in the procession. The Muslims in the city decided to organise a counter procession on the eve of the Prophet's birthday on 13 October. The then Congress government gave permission for the Ram Shila *Yatra*. Considering the fast-approaching 1990 state assembly elections, in order to get the favour from the Muslim community, the Congress government gave permission also to the Prophet's birthday procession on the same day. The procession was huge in number; at the end of the procession, crackers exploded; the crowd panicked. It happened near the Ram Laxman Chowk area; some youth started rioting from the crowd, soon turned into a police–Muslim confrontation. About 27 lives lost in the riots (20 Muslims and 7

⁴¹⁰ “Even as caste riots rock Tamil Nadu, communal violence engulfs Rajasthan and Gujarat,” *India Today*, Oct. 15, 1989. <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/15-10-1989>. Accessed on 10/10/2018. N. S. Saxena, *Communal Riots in India* (Noida: Trishul Publication, 1990), 72. Cr: Asghar Ali Engineer, “Kota: another case of planned violence?” *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 24, No. 49, Dec. 9, 1989, p. 2703.

⁴¹¹ Inderjit Badhwar, “Badaun used to be Indian. Today it is Muslim and Hindu,” *India Today*, Oct. 31, 1989. <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/cover-story/story/19891031-badaun-used-to-be-indian.-today-it-is-muslim-and-hindu-816653-1989-10-31>. Accessed on 10/10/2018.

Hindus), most of which were due to police gunfire. As per government records, there was only 23 deaths, among which 19 were Muslims.⁴¹²

The city of Bhagalpur had a population of 69% Hindus and 30% Muslims. The Babri Masjid–*Ramjanmabhoomi* issue provoked communal tensions in many different parts of the State of Bihar. Violence erupted in the town of Bhagalpur due to various reasons. On 20 August 1989, a Muslim rickshaw-puller was killed during the Hindu *Bihula* procession; in the *Bihula Puja* (Hindu festival) and Muharram (Shia) festival seasons, a large number of people from the two communities gathered which built up tension between them. In October, the Hindu groups got the permission to organise a Ram Shila *Yatra* to Ayodhya. The violence erupted on 24 October while the Ram Shila *Yatra* passing through the Muslim-majority area of Tatarpur shouting anti-Muslim slogans. The Muslims tried to prevent the procession to march through the Muslims' residential areas of Tatarpur. The police opened fire at the crowd to control the violence in which two persons died. Around 20 Muslim students were killed in the ensuing mob violence. The Muslims' houses, shops and religious places were looted and burnt. On 26 October, 18 persons were killed by a mob in the area of Jamuna Kothi. Tragic incidents were also reported from nearby villages. On the same day, the village of Timoni was completely destroyed, and 11 people were killed. On 27 and 28 October, more than a hundred Muslims were killed by a Hindu mob in the village of Chanderi according to official records. Fifty to sixty thousand people were displaced.⁴¹³

5.3 Political scenario of India after 1989

In November 1989, a series of assembly elections were held along with the general elections. At the centre, the Congress Party lost its power. V. P. Singh, a leader of the Janata Dal Party, formed the government and became the Prime Minister with the support of a number of regional parties, including the BJP and the Communist Parties. Troubles quickly arose inside the ruling parties, regarding the issues related to policy concerning peasants, Kashmir and the Babri Masjid. On 7 August 1990, the Prime

⁴¹² N. K. Singh, "BJP reaps rewards for solid grass-root work in Madhya Pradesh," *India Today*, Dec. 15, 1989. <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/nation/story/19891215-bjp-reaps-rewards-for-solid-grassroots-work-in-madhya-pradesh-816951-1989-12-15>. Accessed on 10/10/2018. Cr. Asghar Ali Engineer, "Communal Frenzy at Indore," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 24, No. 44, Nov. 11, 1989. p. 2468.

⁴¹³ Indu Bharti, "Bhagalpur riots and Bihar Government," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 24, No. 48, Dec. 2, 1989. p. 2643. Cr. Alok Kumar Jha, "After the carnage: relief and rehabilitation in Bhagalpur," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 26, No. 1/2, Jan. 5, 1991. p. 20; Iqbal A. Ansari, ed. *Communal Riots: The State and Law in India* (New Delhi: Institute of Objective Studies, 1997), 77.

Minister announced that he was implementing the Mandal Commission report, and advocated affirmative action and quotas in favour of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs). This was not been accepted by the BJP, because this policy was against their Hindu nation ideology. In order to counter the move, the BJP planned to revive the Ram Mandir (temple) issue as forcefully as possible.⁴¹⁴ L. K. Advani, a senior leader of the BJP, started a giant Ram *Rath Yatra* (Ram's Chariot Procession), with a decorated truck with the Ram idol on its front, and millions of devotees from all shades and castes offered flowers, while some offered their own blood. On 25 September 1990, the *yatra* left Somnath town (Gujarat) where the famous Somnath temple was situated. The *yatra* was scheduled to reach Ayodhya (Uttar Pradesh) after passing through hundreds of villages and cities. Advani travelled with the *Rath* for 300 kilometres a day and addressed a minimum of six public rallies every day. The *yatra* became a mass movement all over North India and aroused the religious and militant sentiments among the Hindus. The *yatra* also triggered religious violence in its wake, with riots in cities across North India.⁴¹⁵ At the same time, the *Ram Jyothi Yatras* were organised by the Uttar Pradesh State BJP unit, carrying torches and lights from various cities. On the way, the Sangh Parivar systematically executed violence in the city after city. While each of these riots had its own unique backgrounds such as local rivalries and communal irritants, they were all carried out in a common pattern of execution – rumours were fed by various agents, and there was an organised Hindu networking for the ensuing incidents, all aimed to achieve the political ambitions of the communal leaders.⁴¹⁶

When the *yatra* crossed the border of the Uttar Pradesh, the then Chief Minister of Bihar, Laloo Prasad Yadav's administration stopped the *Rath yatra* at the border of Bihar State and arrested L. K. Advani on 23 October 1990. Advani was arrested along with thousands of followers. In November 1990, in Uttar Pradesh, the then Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav protected the Babri Masjid from the Sangh Parivar's attack twice. In these attempts, about 40,000 *kar sevaks* reached Ayodhya and attacked

⁴¹⁴ Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics: 1925 to the 1990s, Strategies of Identity-Building, Implantation and Mobilization* (New Delhi: The Penguin Group, 1996), 412.

⁴¹⁵ Asha Kiran, *Ram Mandir* (Delhi: Lakshay Books, 2018), 71. Cf. Asghar Ali Engineer, "The bloody trail: Ramjanmabhoomi and communal violence in UP," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 26, No. 4, Jan. 26, 1991. p. 156.

⁴¹⁶ N. S. Saksena, *Communal Riots in India* (Noida: Trishul Publications, 1990), 41.

the mosque; the police and other official guards tried to control the violent mass by opening fire at the crowd which led to the loss of about 30 lives. The Viswa Hindu Parishad (VHP) organised a new *yatra*, the *Asthi Kalash Yatra*, a *yatra* carrying the ashes of the *kar sevaks* who died in Ayodhya. V. P. Singh, then Prime Minister, took a lot of efforts for conciliation, but the BJP withdrew its support and the central government lost its majority.⁴¹⁷

In April 1991, the Sangh Parivar launched a new battle for Ram Mandir to gain political mileage before the mid-term general elections in Uttar Pradesh, and violence swept Uttar Pradesh during that time. Meanwhile, Rajiv Gandhi, the former Prime Minister of India, was assassinated on 21 May 1991, at the hands of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) activists from Sri Lanka.⁴¹⁸ The country was stunned, and the sympathy wave among the people helped the Congress Party to win the polls in the tenth Lok Sabha elections and formed the government at the centre. Narasimha Rao from South India became the new Prime Minister of India. The BJP won the assembly elections of Uttar Pradesh, and the new Chief Minister was a *Hindutva* activist, Kalyan Singh. The BJP continued to win in the States of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh. In September 1992, the Kalyan Singh government in Uttar Pradesh along with the VHP acquired 2.77 acres of land adjacent to the Babri Masjid for the purpose of tourism development.⁴¹⁹

The Sangh Parivar organised a symbolic *Kar Seva* (Religious Gathering) in Ayodhya on 6 December 1992. On that day, the Babri Masjid was demolished within a few hours, under the leadership of the Sangh Parivar, and Hindu idols were fixed in a temporary temple. The shock and rage images of Muslims were telecasted live repeatedly by the BBC channel. Violence erupted all over India and continued till 12 March 1993, during which several bombs were blasted in Mumbai.⁴²⁰ The details of the violence are recorded in the following sections.

⁴¹⁷ Op. cit., Christophe Jaffrelot, "The Hindu nationalist...", p. 13.

⁴¹⁸ Shashi Ahluwalia, Maanakshi Ahluwalia, *Assassination of Rajiv Gandhi* (New Delhi: Mittal Publication, 1991), 2.

⁴¹⁹ Factly, "A brief history of the lok sabha election," Sep. 14, 2015. <https://www.newslandry.com/2015/09/14/a-brief-history-of-the-lok-sabha-elections>. Accessed on 10/10/2018.

⁴²⁰ Asghar Ali Engineer, "Bombay Shames India," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 28, No. 3/4, Jan. 1993. p 62.

5.4 Riots in India after 1989

Ahmedabad is one of the largest cities in Gujarat with 83% of the population belonged to Hindus and 13.8% to Muslims. On 25 September 1990, L. K. Advani, a veteran leader of the BJP, started the *Ram Rath Yatra* (Ram Chariot Procession) from the town of Somnath to Ayodhya. Along the way, this procession triggered violence in different parts of Gujarat. In Ahmedabad, about 30 persons lost their lives in October 1990.⁴²¹ During the time of the Hindu festival of Ganesh Chaturthi in the month of September 1990, riots erupted in cities like Baroda, Surat and Anand. In Baroda, the Ganesh procession was led by the BJP Health Minister of Gujarat; while the procession was crossing the Muslim locality, the mass shouted anti-Muslim slogans and attacked the Muslim shops, and eight persons were killed.⁴²²

Karnailganj is a small town in Gonda District with a population of 70,000 of which 40% Muslims. A riot broke out on 30 September 1990 when the Hindus shouted slogans in support of the Ram temple in the Durga Puja procession. The Muslims became agitated, and as a result, they pelted stones and threw gasoline bombs at the procession. Hindus retaliated and attacked the Muslims. Violence even spread to the villages of the district. As per government records, there were 42 deaths, but according to other sources, it was 100.⁴²³

On 30 October 1990, *kar sevaks* tried to destroy the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya (Uttar Pradesh). The government was firm to prevent the assault. The police opened fire in which 26 *kar sevaks* were killed. In the following days, the Hindu mobs attacked the Muslims violently in several places to take revenge for that incident which claimed dozens of lives. In order to avoid further riots, the Uttar Pradesh State government imposed a curfew about 30 towns. The VHP organised *Asthi Kalash Yatras* throughout the country. These processions caused communal riots in most of the places.⁴²⁴

⁴²¹ Asghar Ali Engineer, "Communal riots in recent months," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 25, No. 40, Oct. 6, 1990. p. 2234. Cr. Steven I. Wilkinson, *Votes and Violence: Electoral Competition and Ethnic Riots in India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 147: "History of communal violence in Gujarat," *Outlook*, Nov. 22, 2002.

⁴²² "History of communal violence in Gujarat," *Outlook*, Nov. 22, 2002.

⁴²³ Yeshwanth Kumar, "Spate of communal violence hits Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh," *India Today*, Oct. 31, 1990.

⁴²⁴ Dilip Awasthi, "VHP, BJP garner strength to resume Kar Seva at Ayodhya, town in grip of communal tension," *India Today*, Dec. 15, 1990. Cr. Op. cit., Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist*, 422.

The city of Bijnor consisted of 56% Hindus and 42% Muslims population. Tension arose between the communities after the Chief Minister of the state promised to protect the Muslims on 9 October 1990 in the context of the Babri Masjid–*Ramjanmabhoomi* issue. The arrested *kar sevaks* were put into jail at Bijnor. Shops were looted and set on fire after the Chief Minister’s visit. On 28 October, rallies were organised to protest against the imprisonment conditions of the arrested *kar sevaks* in Ayodhya. There was a Hindu victory processions march in Bijnor on 30 October, when the VHP hoisted its flag on the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya. The Muslims stoned the procession, which resulted in widespread rioting. The Hindus, encouraged by the arrival of the PAC, attacked Muslims vehemently. According to official reports, 40 died in Bijnor and 8 in other places in the district. According to unofficial sources, there were 200 lives lost in the riot.⁴²⁵

Hyderabad is one of the major cities in South India where 54% Hindus and 43% Muslims lived. There was a tense situation in the city from October 1990. A clash between criminals and the police took place on 9 October in the city which caused some causality. After the arrest of the BJP leader Advani in Bihar on 23 October, the BJP and Muslim organisations distributed provocative pamphlets. The militant groups were fighting continuously between October 29 and November 1 in which 11 people were killed. The killing and rioting continued in the month of December also. Muslim fundamentalists attacked Hindu migrant labourers and killed around 40 people. On the following day, as revenge, many Muslims were killed by Hindus. According to the official report, 134 people were killed and another 300 injured in these riots.⁴²⁶

The population in the city of Aligarh consisted of 57% Hindus and 41% Muslims. The Ayodhya event of 30 October 1990 and the following *Asthi Kalash Yatras* created tensions between the communities throughout the state including Aligarh. On 7 December, the Muslims clashed with the PAC soldiers; the PAC fired and killed three Muslims. On 8 December, a Hindu mob attacked the Gomti Express

⁴²⁵ Roger Jeffery and Patricia M. Jeffery, “The Bijnor Riots, October 1990: Collapse of a Mythical Special Relationship?” *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 29, No. 10, Mar. 05, 1994, p. 552.

⁴²⁶ Sudhir Kakar, *The Colors of Violence: Cultural Identities, Religion and Conflict* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 65. Cr. Ashok Das, “Hyderabad December 8, 1990 over 200 dead,” *Hindustan Times*, Nov. 03, 2008.

train, pulled out several passengers and killed about six including Hindu passengers.⁴²⁷ Muslims were burned to death on the same day in the locality of Jogiwara near the Sasni Gate police station. Over 50 people died in a single day. A false rumour was spread on 10 December that 28 patients had been killed in the Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College Hospital of the Aligarh Muslim University. The violence intensified after the rumour. The publication of the rumour in the Hindi vernacular press further aggregated the attacks on Muslims by Hindu mobs. The media reported 75 deaths. Official accounts recorded 92. The People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) claimed the death toll to be 125–150.⁴²⁸

Kanpur is one of the cities in Uttar Pradesh where the population had 78% Hindus and 20% Muslims. On 10 December 1990, Muslim hawkers were attacked by the militant Hindus and their goods burned in Kanpur (Uttar Pradesh). In retaliation, Hindus' shops were looted and set fire by the Muslims. The Hindus also shattered the Muslim shops and damaged a mosque. Six people lost their life in the violence. On 12 December, there was a confrontation between the Muslims and the police in which four persons died in the police firing. Twenty people lost their lives during this violence.⁴²⁹

There were 79% Hindus and 21% Muslims living in the city of Khurja. Two incidents of communal riots occurred during the time of the *Ramjanmabhoomi* campaign. There was a riot on 15 December 1990, in which a Muslim government employee was stabbed by a Hindu. He was taken to the hospital in Delhi for treatment, but there was a false report published by the Hindi newspaper *Aaj* saying that he died. This false news triggered the anger of the Muslims in the town and led to widespread violence in Khurja. The Hindu upper castes people specifically attacked a few Muslim houses at Sarai Sheikh Alam area. In that violence, 74 people died (62 Muslims and 12 Hindus). There was a bomb exploded in a Muslim's house on 31 January 1991, which led to a riot again in the town. This time the violence continued till 5 February, claiming

⁴²⁷ Sanjoy Hazarika, "Muslim-Hindu riots in India Leave 93 dead in 3 days," *The New York Times*, Dec. 10, 1990. <https://www.nytimes.com/1990/12/10/world/muslim-hindu-riots-in-india-leave-93-dead-in-3-days.html> Accessed on 11/10/2018.

⁴²⁸ "Communal riots in Aligarh, Dec. 1990–Jan. 1991," *A Report by People's Union for Civil Liberties*. http://www.pucl.org/major_reports/Communal_Riots_in_Aligarh_1990-91.pdf. Accessed on 11/10/2018. Cr. Asghar Ali Engineer, "Aligarh riots: unplanned outburst," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 30, No. 13, Apr. 1, 1995. p. 667.

⁴²⁹ Asghar Ali Engineer, "The bloody trail: Ramjanmabhoomi and communal violence in UP," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 26, No. 4, Jan. 26, 1991. p 158.

22 lives (18 Muslims and 4 Hindus). Rumours spread by the VHP-inspired inflammatory pamphlets stirred up communal hatreds.⁴³⁰

The Bhadrak town had only 6% Muslims and the rest were Hindus. They lived together peacefully until 1990. The Babri Masjid–Ramjanmabhoomi issue became an issue of the Hindus against the Muslims all over India. On 24 March 1991, the Hindu festival of Ram Navami was celebrated; the Hindus in Bhadrak got permission to hold a procession through the Muslim quarters. While the procession was moving through the Muslim’s area, slogans were raised against the Muslims, and violence erupted. A state wide *bandh* (general strike) was called by the BJP. Violence also flared up in the town of Soro. A total of 17 persons died in Bhadrak and 16 persons in Soro.⁴³¹

Saharanpur was a peaceful city with 52% Hindus and 44% Muslims. In the year 1991, the Muslim’s festival of Ramzan coincided with the Hindu festival of Ram Navami. On 24 March, the Ram Navami procession was stopped near a mosque because that was the evening prayer time for the Muslims. The Hindu communal organisations insisted on completing the procession by going through the mosque route. On 26 March, the local administration gave permission for the procession to complete its route. During the time of the procession, they stopped near the Jama Masjid and shouted anti-Muslim slogans. This provocative attitude of the Hindus triggered communal riots. A rumour was spread that the mosque had been attacked. The young Muslims retaliated. On 27 March, the Muslims attacked Hindus’ shops in the town. The official record claimed that 12 persons died, but the media reported more than 40 deaths.⁴³²

Varanasi is a famous pilgrimage place for the Hindus where 68% Hindus and 31% Muslims lived in the city. A large-scale riot took place in June 1991 in the city of Varanasi. Three hours of violence claimed 10 lives, 126 injured and 117 houses demolished. Over 60 lakh worth of looms were destroyed.⁴³³ On 8 November 1991, a

⁴³⁰ Uma Chakravarti, Prem Chowdhury, Pradip Dutta, Zoya Hasan, Kumkum Sangari and Tanika Sarkar, “Khurja riots 1990-91: understanding the conjuncture,” *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 27, No. 18, May 2, 1992. p. 951.

⁴³¹ Debabrata Mohanty, “Odisha: Bhadrak communal violence has taken many by surprise,” *The Indian Express*, Apr. 12, 2017. <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/odisha-bhadrak-communal-violence-has-taken-many-by-surprise-curfew-facebook-god-comment-hindu-muslim-4610171/> Accessed on 11/10/2018. Cr. Asghar Ali Engineer, “Communal riots in recent months,” *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 25, No. 40, Oct. 6, 1990. p. 2235.

⁴³² Asghar Ali Engineer, “Communal riots before, during and after lok sabha elections,” *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 26, No. 37, Sep. 1991. p. 2135.

⁴³³ Ramesh Menon, “Communal riots in Varanasi ruin traditional loom industry,” *India Today*, Jul. 15, 1991.

Kali Puja procession was organised by the Navsang Hindu Club. The marchers shouted anti-Muslim slogans and mockingly threw firecrackers at them when crossing through the Muslim area of Madanpura, which led to a confrontation between the two communities. The Hindu rioters entered into a nearby cinema hall and harassed the Muslim audience. There was a strong retaliation from the Muslim men who dragged the Hindus into Madanpura's narrow lanes and stabbed 11 of them to death. The PAC was deployed in that area killed one Muslim and injured many while they carried out violent search operations to catch the culprits.⁴³⁴

Sitamarhi is one of the district headquarters in Bihar State, where 79% Hindus and 21% Muslims lived together. A Durga Puja procession organised on 2 October 1992 started with shouting slogans such as 'Jai Shri Ram' (Long Lives Ram). When they reached near a mosque, some Muslim youths stopped the procession, resulting in a clash. On 4 October, the Puja Samiti (Prayers' Committee) decided to take the Durga idol through a Muslim-dominated area and immerse it in a by-pass pool. During the Durga procession on 8 October, members of several *akharas* (traditional physical training centres) shouted anti-Muslim slogans, resulting in a violent clash between the armed marchers and the Muslim youths. Two persons were killed in the police firing. Official sources recorded 48 deaths (41 Muslims, 3 Hindus and 4 unidentified persons), while unofficially recorded death figure was about 100, the majority of whom were Muslims.⁴³⁵

5.5 Riots after Demolition of Babri Masjid in 1992

It was in 1991 that the BJP won the assembly election and formed its first government in the largest state of India called Uttar Pradesh.⁴³⁶ On 6 December 1992, the Sangh Parivar cadres gathered in large numbers at Ayodhya to lay the foundation stone for Ram temple. They wanted that Ram temple be built in the place where the 450-year-old Babri Masjid stood. They demolished the Masjid on that day, which was a big blow

⁴³⁴ Dilip Awasthi, "Varanasi: district administration turns blind eye as Hindus and Muslims clash," *India Today*, Dec. 15, 1991.

⁴³⁵ Farzand Ahmed, "Communal riots expose Laloo's promises in Bihar," *India Today*, Oct. 31, 1992. Cr. Asghar Ali Engineer, "Sitamarhi on fire," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 27, No. 46, Nov. 14, 1992. p. 2463.

⁴³⁶ Election result in Uttarpradesh 1991. <http://www.elections.in/uttar-pradesh/assembly-constituencies/1991-election-results.html> Accessed on 24/10/2017.

to the secular democratic fabric of India. It shook the whole nation, but it became a great victory for the Sangh Parivar.⁴³⁷

The city of Surat population consisted of 84% Hindus and 12% Muslims. The BJP workers organised a rally in Surat to support the *kar sevaks* who demolished the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya on 6 December 1992. More than a thousand VHP and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) members participated in the procession. The angry Muslim youngsters destroyed the shops belonging to Hindus. The Bharatiya Minority Suraksha Sangh (BMSS), a local organisation, called for a Surat *bandh* on 7 December. However, the violence spread to the whole city on the following day. Fifty-seven people were killed, and the entire slum was completely destroyed. In the area of Varachha Road, a violent mob attacked Muslim houses and killed 27 people. In Ved Road area, Muslim houses were looted, and about 32 persons were reportedly killed. The media reported that about 180 people died during these riots. The majority of those killed were Muslims. About 19,000 people became refugees.⁴³⁸

Mumbai experienced a series of Hindu–Muslim violence after the demolition of the Babri Masjid on 6 December 1992. When the news of the demolition of the Babri Masjid spread all over India, Muslims came out into the streets and reacted violently. Spontaneous communal violence exploded in various parts of the country. The communal Hindus celebrated the Masjid demolition by holding victory processions and rallies. Similar events were organised in Mumbai city also. The Shiv Sena, the local right-wing political party, organised a rally in the slum of Dharavi, which provoked the Muslims. They attacked and damaged public properties like state transport buses, other offices, Hindu temples and shops. On 7 December, two policemen were killed in a clash between police and Muslim mobs. The police reinforcement arrived on 8 December, opened fire in many areas of Dharavi and arrested many Muslims. During the riot, 42 persons were killed, out of which 40 persons were victims of a police shooting. According to media reports, 90% of the dead were killed by police firing. According to

⁴³⁷ NDTV Correspondent, *Report: Sequence of Events on December 6*. Nov. 23, 2009. <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/report-sequence-of-events-on-december-6-405426> Accessed on 24/11/2017.

⁴³⁸ Kalpana Shah, Smita Shah and Neha Shah, “The nightmare of Surat”, *Manushi*, No. 74-75, Jan.–Apr. 1993. p. 55. <http://www.manushi.in/docs/43-nightmare-of-surat.pdf>. Accessed on 11/10/2018. Cr. Sudhir Chandra, “Of communal consciousness and communal violence, impressions from post-riots Surat,” *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 28. No. 36, Sep. 1993. p. 1884.

media report, there were 250 people died in Mumbai and 57 died in other places of Maharashtra.⁴³⁹

There were many right-wing organisations actively promoting the *Hindutva* ideology in the State of Karnataka. Violence erupted in Bangalore after the Babri Masjid demolition. It was considered to be the worst communal riots of the four southern states. According to media report 73 deaths in the state in December 1992, out of which 19 people died in Bangalore; most of them were killed in police firing. The BJP called for a *bandh* (strike). A Muslim mob attacked the police station at Gulbarga, where nine of them were killed by the police in retaliation. The violence spread to the twin cities of Hubli and Dharwad. In Bidar, 10 people died in a Hindu–Muslim clash, out of which 5 were killed in police firing.⁴⁴⁰

The post-Babri Masjid demolition violence also badly affected the city of Kanpur after 6 December 1992. Muslims were enraged on hearing about the demolition of Babri Masjid from the BBC news. They started looting Hindu shops and government offices. Rioting spread to the city in the following days. The Hindu mobs retaliated and attacked Muslims. Industrial units and shops were looted and set on fire. Muslim properties, houses, and mosques were attacked and looted. Eleven people died during the riots.⁴⁴¹

The State of Assam had a population consisting of 65% Hindus and 31% Muslims. There was an existing tension among the population due to the Bengali–Assamese language issue. On 7 December 1992, the Muslims protested against the demolition of the Babri Masjid by lighting their houses. They printed posters demanding the reconstruction of the Babri Masjid and pasted in many places of Nagaon District. On 8 December, a local Congress Party leader gave a provocative speech in the town of Doboka which led to violence wherein 18 persons were killed on that day. The retaliation which took place on the following day in the town of Jamunamukh

⁴³⁹ State Bureau Reports, “Babri Masjid demolition aftermath: Religious hatred engulfs India, over 1000 people die,” *India Today*, Dec. 21, 1992. Cr. Srikrishna Report, <https://www.sabrang.com/srikrish/vol1.htm>. Accessed on 10/10/2018. Kamlesh Damodar Sutar, “25 Years of Bombay riots: How the mayhem changed a city and its people forever,” *India Today*, Dec. 7, 2017. Asghar Ali Engineer, “Bombay riots: second phase,” *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 28, No. 12/13, Mar. 27, 1993. p. 505.

⁴⁴⁰ “A report: citizens for democracy- Karnataka, People’s Union for Civil LibertiesKarnataka, Karnataka Civil Liberties Committee and Karnataka Ekta,” http://puclkarnataka.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/Events.of_.December.1992.pdf. Accessed on 10/10/2018.

⁴⁴¹ Haidar Naqvi, “Kanpur (UP) December 8, 1992 – 254 dead,” *Hindustan Times*, Nov. 03, 2008.

claimed about 20 lives. While official estimation of the total number of deaths in the state was 87, the media reported that around 300 people died in the riots.⁴⁴²

The State of Rajasthan was also affected by the communal violence after the Babri Masjid demolition. The riots that took place from 7 to 9 December 1992 claimed about 60 lives all over the state. The capital city Jaipur, affected badly, reported witnessing 28 deaths. Most of the people were killed by the police shooting.⁴⁴³

Curfew was imposed in the city of Calcutta from 6 December 1992 onwards on the eve of Babri Masjid demolition. Considering the situation, the curfew was lifted on 9 December. Some criminals set the Muslim slum of Metiabruz on fire, which claimed 35 lives of the slum-dweller Muslims.⁴⁴⁴

The city of Bhopal is the capital of the State of Madhya Pradesh, with a population consisting of 68% Hindus and 27% Muslims. On 6 December 1992, a victory procession over the demolition of the Babri Masjid was organised by the Bajrang Dal in the Muslim-dominated area, and the television channels repeatedly reported about the demolition of the Masjid, which stimulated communal violence. The angry Muslim youths damaged government buildings and Hindus' houses in their area. The violence further spread through rumours and agitation by the Hindu activists. Four thousand Muslim families became homeless due to the violence. The BJP state government supported the Hindu activists and took little effort to control the violence. The riots continued till 15 December. The official record noted 142 deaths out of which 34 were shot dead by the police. But the media reported more than 175 deaths.⁴⁴⁵

On the night of 10 December 1992, violence took place in Delhi also, in the area of Seelampur. The rumour of the Mustafa mosque being razed down triggered riots; the Muslims started attacking the government offices and vehicles. The Hindus accused that Muslims raped and killed a minor Hindu girl. So, the violent Hindu mobs started

⁴⁴² Bureau Reports, "Babri Masjid demolition aftermath: religious hatred engulfs India, over 1000 people die," *India Today*, Dec. 21, 1992.

⁴⁴³ Edward A. Cargan, "At least 200 killed in India as Muslim – Hindu rage," *The New York Times*, Dec. 8, 1992. <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/12/08/world/at-least-200-killed-in-india-as-muslim-hindu-riots-rage.html>. Accessed on 11/10/2018.

⁴⁴⁴ Bureau Reports, "Babri Masjid demolition aftermath: Religious hatred engulfs India, over 1000 people died," *India Today*, Dec. 21, 1992.

⁴⁴⁵ People's Union for Democratic Rights – Delhi, "Bhopal riots: a report," *Sanskritik Morcha*, Bhopal, Apr. 1993. p. 16. <http://www.unipune.ac.in/snc/cssh/HumanRights>. Accessed on 12/10/2018.

attacking shops and houses, and a large-scale arson took place. Around 20 people died, most of whom were burned alive or killed by police shooting.⁴⁴⁶

The first phase of rioting took place as a spontaneous reaction by the Muslims infuriated by the demolition of the Babri Masjid on 6 December 1992. Since then, the situation in the city remained tense. The Muslims took precautions and began to attend the Friday prayers in large numbers. The Hindus responded by organising *Maha Aartis* (public displays of aggressive faith) from 26 December 1992 to 20 January 1993.⁴⁴⁷

The second phase of the riots took place on 6 January 1993 as a result of the communal propaganda spread by the Sangh Parivar organisation. A rumour was spread that some Hindus had desecrated a Muslim *dargah* (grave of a Muslim saint). At the same time, inflammatory articles and provocative editorials were written by Bal Thackeray, the Shiv Sena patriarch, in the newspapers *Samma and Navaaka*. This was immediately followed by an eruption of violence at the Null Bazar, the Mohammad Ali Road area and Bhendi Bazar. On 8 January, a Hindu family was burned to death in the Jogeshwari area as revenge. This event was published in the newspapers. The Sangh Parivar retaliated by attacking the Muslims. The activists of Shiv Sena carried out arson, looting, killing, stabbings, rape and destruction of Muslims' worship places till 20 January. Five hundred and fifty-seven people died in the horrific violence and left more than a thousand people injured. People died due to mob violence and police firing.⁴⁴⁸

A series of bomb blasts took place in different places of Mumbai on 12 March 1993. It was a vengeance act of the Muslims with the help of the Muslim mafia leader Dawood Ibrahim who operated from Dubai. The Stock Exchange Building in the Fort area, the Sena Bhavan at Dadar, the Zaveri Katha, the Century Bazars, the Air India Building at Nariman Point, the Hotel Sea Rock at Bandra, the Hotel Centaur at Santacruz Airport and the Hotel Centaur at Juhu were targeted. According to the Srikrishna Commission, 257 people were killed and 713 others injured in the bomb blasts.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁷ Dileep Padgaonkar, ed. *When Bombay Burned* (Delhi: UBS Publishers, 1993), 89.

⁴⁴⁸ Report of the Srikrishna Commission, <http://caravandaily.com/portal/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Abridged-version-of-Srikrishna-Commissions-report.pdf>. Accessed on 04/10/2018.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

The city of Hubli had a population consisting of 69% Hindus and 26% Muslims. The Idgah *Maidan* (ground), a piece of open ground, was leased out by the Hubli municipality to the Anjuman-E-Islam (AEI), a Muslim organisation, in 1921 to hold prayers. Troubles started in the 1960s when the AEI built a commercial building on the *maidan*. On 15 August 1992, India's Independence Day, the BJP President Murli Manohar Joshi hoisted the national flag in Srinagar (Kashmir). Similarly, the Hubli's BJP local leaders tried to hoist the national flag on the Idgah *Maidan*. It was countered and stopped by the government officials until 1994. On 15 August 1994, two BJP national leaders, Sikander Bakht and Uma Bharti, came to join the flag-hoisting campaign in Hubli on the Idgah *Maidan*. The Karnataka police arrested the BJP leaders. The angry BJP activists resorted to violence. The police opened fire in order to resist the mob which killed six people. Thus, the Sangh Parivar succeeded in marking their symbol of the communalisation of South India.⁴⁵⁰

Violence broke out in the city of Bangalore after the Doordarshan (government television channel) programme was broadcasted in Urdu on 2 October 1994, just after the Kannada news bulletin (Kannada is the dominant local language). A protest was organised by the pro-Kannada activists on 3 October; in front of Bangalore's Doordarshan office, about 300 members gathered on that day. Rallies and protests were organised in the city for over two days. On 6 October, the Sangh Parivar turned the linguistic agitation into a communal one. The agitators became violent and damaged public transport buses and official vehicles. On 7 October, which was a Friday, while Muslims were praying in their mosque, a Hindu protest procession passed near the mosque and shouted anti-Muslim slogans. The Muslims countered the protesting group, and violence spread all over the city. Houses of the Muslims were looted and destroyed. People were killed in the mob violence and also by police shooting. According to the official source, 25 people died in the riot. On 8 October, the government stopped the Urdu news bulletin.⁴⁵¹

Coimbatore is one of the largest industrial cities in Tamil Nadu, South India. Only 8% of the city's population belonged to Muslims. Muslim businessmen were successful, which created envy among the Hindus in the city. The Hindu *Munnani* (a

⁴⁵⁰ Asghar Ali Engineer, "Communalism and communal violence 1994," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 30, No. 5, Feb. 4, 1995. p. 249.

⁴⁵¹ Asghar Ali Engineer, "Bangalore violence: linguistic or communal," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 29, No. 44, Oct. 29, 1994. p. 2854.

Hindu organisation) leader, Rama Gopalan, visited Coimbatore many a times and motivated the Hindus to buy things only from Hindus' shops. The Tamil Nadu police were also not happy with the Muslim community because of the bombing of the RSS office at Chennai in 1993. The Muslims formed various organisations for their better networking to help the community. The Al-Ummah was founded by Syed Ahmed Basha and M. H. Jawahirullah after the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1993. Later, in 1995, M. H. Jawahirullah founded the Tamil Nadu Muslim Munnetra Kazhaghham. These organisations were in regular conflict with the police.⁴⁵²

In this situation, three Muslim youths belonging to the Al-Ummah murdered a police constable on 29 November 1997. In retaliation, a group of policemen, in collaboration with Hindu *Munnani* activists, set fire to Muslim shops. The violence spread in different parts of the city. Twenty people died in the riots, including 18 Muslims (8 in police firing) and 2 Hindus.⁴⁵³ A series of bomb blasts occurred on 14 February 1998. Around 50 people were killed, and about 200 people were injured in the blasts. It was a retaliation act of the Al-Ummah for the killings of Muslims in police firing between November and December of 1997. Various explosions continued in different places till 17 February. In retaliation, Hindu activists attacked Muslim shops and properties. The government had to send the army to control the situation.⁴⁵⁴

5.6 Political scenario of India in the year 1994

Political instability prevailed between 1991 and 2003 in the State of Uttar Pradesh, with 10 chief ministers and President's rule being imposed three times during the period. The Uttar Pradesh 1993 assembly election results changed the state's political scenario from communal to caste politics, and in the new paradigm Mayawati, a charismatic lady leader of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), and Mulayam Singh, a leader of the Samajwadi Party who became the Chief Minister in 1993, emerged as the two regional leaders.⁴⁵⁵ The BJP was still a force to be reckoned with in the region. Meanwhile, the

⁴⁵² T. S. Subramanian, "Confrontation in Coimbatore," *Frontline*, Vol. 14, No. 25, Dec. 26, 1997. <https://www.frontline.in/magazine/archive/>. Accessed on 13/10/2018.

⁴⁵³ T. S. Subramanian, "Behind the Coimbatore tragedy," *Frontline*, Vol. 15, No. 5, Mar. 20, 1998. <https://www.frontline.in/static/html/fl1505/15050090.htm>. Accessed on 13/10/2018.

⁴⁵⁴ Asghar Ali Engineer, "Communal violence, 1998, shifting patterns," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 33, No. 52, Dec. 26, 1998, p. 3300.

⁴⁵⁵ Christophe Jaffrelot, *India's Silent Revolution: The Rise of the Low Castes in North Indian Politics* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003), 396.

BJP was progressing rapidly in Western India. In Gujarat, the BJP continued to win the assembly elections in 1995 and shared power with the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra.⁴⁵⁶

The Congress Party, on the other hand, was losing its popularity among the people in the states as well as the power in the centre. In the 1996 Lok Sabha election, the party's performance was so poor that it was compelled to support the Third Front. Deve Gowda, a Janata Dal leader from Karnataka, became the Prime Minister. After one year, the Congress Party withdrew its support for Deve Gowda, and I. K. Gujral replaced him as the Prime Minister. Gujral's Prime Ministership lasted only for a few months. In the 1999 elections, the BJP won enough seats to form a well-balanced government. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, a BJP leader, a soft face of the Sangh Parivar, became the Prime Minister. He was able to form a strong coalition of 15 different parties with a minimal common programme. The number of rioting considerably reduced during the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) coalition government of the 15 parties.⁴⁵⁷ In the years 1998 and 1999, the Sangh Parivar's attention shifted to the Christians. They began to attack the Christian tribals and missionaries in Gujarat.

5.7 Violence against Christians in Gujarat in 1998–1999

Incidents of religious violence against the Christians came to be witnessed in March 1998 in the State of Gujarat when the BJP came to power. In April 1998, a group of Hindu activists destroyed the St. Antony's Catholic Church and other structures associated with the church which were at different stages of construction in Naroda, a suburban area located in the outskirts of Ahmedabad. The Sangh Parivar colluded with the police and the local BJP government officials to execute their agenda. The head of the village council claimed that the church was demolished because it violated the local building code. However, no prior notice was given to the church officials in the matter. As in the case of the violence against the Muslims, the basic reasons behind the aggressive act was the political and economic power ambitions of the Hindus and the ideology of making a Hindu nation based on *Hindutva*.⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁶ Atul Chandra, "1991–2007: The epic saga of elections in Uttar Pradesh," *Swarajya*, Published in 2017. <https://swarajyamag.com/politics/1991-2017-the-epic-saga-of-elections-in-uttar-pradesh>. Accessed on 04/10/2018.

⁴⁵⁷ <http://www.elections.in/parliamentary-constituencies/1999-election-results.html>. Accessed on 04/10/2018.

⁴⁵⁸ "Politics by other means: attacks against Christians in India," *Human Right Watch*, Vol. 11, No. 6(c), Sep. 1999, p. 15.

Christian schools were also targeted. On 16 July, the Shantiniketan High School run by Jesuit priests of the Loyola Education Trust in Zankhav village, Surat District was attacked, and its playground was completely damaged by the mob using a tractor. Before the incident, two Gujarati newspapers, the *Gujarat Samachar* and *Sandesh*, had published a series of aggressive articles against the Jesuit priests, accusing them of forcible conversions of tribals to Christianity and that only Christians were admitted as students in the school.⁴⁵⁹

On 11 November, several Christian tribals were beaten up in Dahunia village in Dangs District. They were compelled to undergo a ceremony of conversion to Hinduism. If not, they were not permitted to draw water from the village well and their cattle were isolated from others. The elected head of the village council called a *sarpanch* acted in favour of the Hindus. Christians were prevented from gaining employment in any of the village's government projects.⁴⁶⁰

Some petty incidents of aggression against the Christians continued to be witnessed throughout the year and reached its peak during the Christmas week of 1998. The Hindu Jagran Manch (HJM) is a sister organisation of the Sangh Parivar, which is comprised of members from the Bajrang Dal, VHP and RSS. The HJM got permission to have a rally on December 25 in Ahwa town in Dangs District. About 4000 people took part in the rally chanting anti-Christian slogans. After the rally, the crowd became violent and started to attack churches, Christian schools, and shops belonged to Christians and Muslims. These attacks continued till 3 January 1999. At least 25 different village churches and schools were burned down in the state during this time.⁴⁶¹

A well-planned strategy seems to have been worked out by the *Hindutva* forces throughout the State of Gujarat. Their prime objective was to communalise the society at grass-roots level. The Bajrang Dal recruited youngsters from every village as activists for the purpose of communalising the society. The VHP also strengthen its activities all over Gujarat, such as conducting 'Artis' (prayer ceremonies) in every village, revival

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁰ Indian Social Institute, *State of Human Rights in India 1998* (New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 1999), 53.

⁴⁶¹ "Anti-Christian violence on the rise in India: new report details politics behind extremist Hindu attacks," *Human Rights Watch*, Sep. 30, 1999. <https://www.hrw.org/news/1999/09/30/anti-christian-violence-rise-india>. Accessed on 08/10/2018. Cf. Andrew Buckser and Stephen D. Glazier, eds. *The Anthropology of Religious Conversion* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, INC, 2003), 43.

of Hindu festivals and the distribution of idols of Hindu Gods.⁴⁶² A well-planned programme to bring the tribals into the Hindu fold was executed throughout the tribal region of South Gujarat. They established units of the VHP and Bajrang Dal in every tribal village. Regular visits and preaching by the Swamis, construction of temples for the tribals, etc. were being pursued vigorously. The physical assaults on Christians, disruption of prayer meetings, attack on Christian churches, etc. were parts of the strategy of the VHP.⁴⁶³

The Sangh Parivar wanted to have rallies in the tribal belt for various reasons. The prime aim was to attain immediate political mileage. The tribal region of Gujarat had traditionally been supporters of the Congress Party. To shatter the strength of the Congress Party among the tribals and to enable the entry of the BJP, the Sangh Parivar played the communal card. The BJP had only 7 of the 26 reserved seats for Scheduled Tribe (ST) MLAs (Members of Legislative Assembly). The rest were with Congress. The second aim was related to the RSS plan to establish a Hindu raj (rule). They insisted that the non-Hindu communities should be treated as second-class citizens. The Sangh Parivar's long-term objective was to impose Hindu dominance all over India.⁴⁶⁴

The violence against the Christians by the Sangh Parivar was a well-planned endeavour. There were 311 villages in Dangs District with the population of 170,000 people in 1999. About 97% of the population in the district belonged to tribal communities. The literacy rate among the tribal communities in Dangs was 47%, as against 61.29% of Gujarat. The literacy rate of the tribes in Gujarat in 1981 was 21.14%. In 1991, the literary rate improved to 36.45% because of the Christian missionaries. Christianity had been established at Dangs in the year 1907. The population of tribal Christians in this district increased considerably between the 1981 and the 1991 censuses.⁴⁶⁵ The Sangh Parivar claimed that the number of Christians in Dangs District was around 25,000 in 1991, which means it had 416% growth within 10 years. For this reason, the Sangh Parivar targeted the District of Dangs.⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁶² Satyakam Joshi, "Tribals, missionaries and sadhus: understanding violence in the Dangs," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 34, No. 37. Sep. 11–17, 1999. P. 2668.

⁴⁶³ "Violence in Gujrat: test case for a larger fundamentalist agenda," *National Alliance of Women*, 1999.

⁴⁶⁴ "Politics by other means: attacks against Christians in India," *Human Right Watch*, Vol. 11, No. 6(c), Sep. 1999. 21.

⁴⁶⁵ "Conversios: A threat or a Bogey?" *The Hindu*, Jan. 17, 1999.

⁴⁶⁶ V. Venkatesan, "Ahate campaign in Gujarat," *Frontline*, Vol. 16, No. 2. Jan. 16–29, 1999.

Swami Asheemanand⁴⁶⁷ along with the HJM activists travelled through 311 villages of Dangs District and spread their propaganda for a couple of years. They polarised Hindus by distributing pamphlets everywhere. One of the propaganda against the minorities was the charge that “Muslim men were trapping Hindu girls into marriage. The populations of Christians and Muslims in the country since independence have increased at a far greater rate than the population of Hindus, and that Hindus should think twice before handing the country back to a Christian foreigner-namely Italian-born Congress Party president Sonia Gandhi”.⁴⁶⁸

5.8 Communal riots in India after 2002

In February 2002, a shocking massacre took place in Ahmedabad, in Godhra, and in the neighbourhood of the State of Gujarat. This led to mass violence against Muslims which lasted for several weeks.⁴⁶⁹ The violence was triggered on 27 February 2002 by an alleged attack in Godhra railway station in which Hindu pilgrims and *kar sevaks* were travelling back from Ayodhya (Uttar Pradesh). The *kar sevaks* were supporters of the construction of the Ram temple in the place of the demolished Babri Masjid. It was suspected that *kar sevaks* ill-treated some Muslim passengers, insisting that they shout ‘Jai Shri Ram’ and ‘Long Live Ram’. They also refused to pay money to the Muslim station vendors for the refreshments they were selling. It was also alleged that the *kar sevaks* harassed a Muslim woman in the train. One of the passengers pulled the chain to stop the train; it stopped in a Muslim area of Godhra. About 2000 people attacked the train and set fire to the carriages. In that incident, 58 Hindus died, including 14 children and 25 women. On that day evening, the dead bodies were taken to Ahmedabad, the capital of Gujarat, for a public homage.⁴⁷⁰ The Sangh Parivar called for a state-wide *bandh* (strike) on 28 February with the support of the then ruling BJP government in Gujarat. The riots started on that day. The VHP, Bajrang Dal, RSS, and BJP activists entered into the Muslim areas and brutally attacked the Muslim

⁴⁶⁷ Nabh Kumar Sarkar, better known as Swami Asheemanand, is originally from West Bengal came to Dangs in 1997 to set up an ashram and became a key coordinator of Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram and organises conversions to Hinduism. Rajesh Ahuja, “Asheemanana’s journey from ‘hero go Dangs’ to terror attack accused,” *Hindustan Times*, New Delhi. Apr. 17, 2018.

⁴⁶⁸ “VHP unleashes pamphlet attack on Sonia, minorities,” *The Times of India* (Ahmedabad), Sep. 3, 1999.

⁴⁶⁹ David Emmanuel Singh, “Hinduism, Islam and mission challenges today,” *Transformation*, Vol. 20, No. 4, Oct. 2003. p. 206.

⁴⁷⁰ “What is the 2002 Godhra train case?” *The Indian Express*, Oct. 7, 2017; <https://indianexpress.com/article/what-is/what-is-godhra-case-gujarat-riots-sabarmati-express-narendra-modi-4881537>. Accessed on 13/10/2018.

households. The police refused to intervene; in fact, they participated in some of the attacks and reportedly colluded with Hindu mobs.⁴⁷¹

In Ahmedabad, 252 people were reportedly killed. The worst killing happened in the areas of Naroda Patia and Gulmarg Society. Sixty-five people were burned alive after being hacked and raped in Naroda Patia by a Hindu mob. In Gulmarg Society, Ahsan Jafry, a former Muslim MP (Member of Parliament), was cut into pieces and burned. About 250 Muslims who took refuge in his house were attacked by a violent mob, and 70 of them were killed and burned.⁴⁷²

Violence rocked the entire State of Gujarat. The violence also spread to the rural villages. About 1200 villages were affected by violence. The tribal communities, as never before, joined hands with the Hindus in attacking the Muslims. Best Bakery, a Muslim establishment in the city of Baroda, was attacked and set on fire on 1 March 2002, causing 14 people to be burned to death. In another incident, about 249 people were killed in Panchmahal District. There were killings in other districts also, 28 in Sabarkantha District, 30 in Kheda District, 57 in Mehsana District, 54 in Dahod District and unverified numbers of people in other districts.⁴⁷³ The rioters targeted all the Muslim establishments. The madrasas, *dargahs* (shrines), graveyards and mosques were destroyed. About 98,000 people became refugees, including 10,000 Hindus. Sexual assault formed part of the violence. There were gang-rapes, and pregnant women were disembowelled. Communal violence continued until the end of April 2002.⁴⁷⁴

The population of Gorakhpur city consisted of 78% Hindus and 21% Muslims. The city is famous for the Gorakhnath temple, which is situated in a Muslim area. It is an important Hindu religious centre in eastern Uttar Pradesh and a famous pilgrim place for Hindus. The chief priest of the temple, Yogi Adityanath, has been an MP for the Gorakhpur constituency since 1998. He is an aggressive *Hindutva* politician who often conducts *yatras* and other religious programs to keep his flocks active. The youth Militia Hindu *YuvaVahini* was founded by Adityanath. The trained young Hindu

⁴⁷¹ A report on Gujarat Riots 2002, *Human Rights Watch*, Vol. 14, No. 3c, Apr. 2002. p. 18. <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/india/gujarat.pdf>. Accessed on 13/10/2018.

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*, 21.

⁴⁷³ Asghar Ali Engineer, "Communal riots in 2002, a survey," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 38, No. 2, Jan. 25, 2003. p. 281.

⁴⁷⁴ A report on Gujarat Riots 2002, *Human Rights Watch*, Vol. 14, No. 3c, Apr. 2002. p. 61. <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/india/gujarat.pdf>.

activists are very aggressive in nature and dominant in the sub-region of Poorvanchal in eastern Uttar Pradesh.⁴⁷⁵ In 2003, violence occurred between the communities when Adityanath led the Holi festival procession and marched through the Muslim-dominated locality. The Imam of a mosque and two other people were murdered by the marchers. Tension remained in between the communities, until it flared up again on 27 January 2007, during the time of the Shia Muslim festival of Muharram. The Muharram procession came in contact with an intoxicated Hindu marriage throng. A violent clash ensued between the two groups, in which a Hindu was badly injured. Adityanath and his militia Hindu *Yuva Vahini* activists rushed to the site and struck back by demolishing a *Mazar* (tomb of a Muslim saint). Adityanath was arrested on 29 January for instigating the violence which erupted again in the city. About five people were killed in the violence.⁴⁷⁶

The city of Indore is one of the major cities in the State of Madhya Pradesh, where 81% Hindus and 13% Muslims live. The BJP captured the power in the State of Madhya Pradesh in 2003. The state was turned into a centre for *Hindutva* propaganda. The other neighbouring towns of Indore, such as Ujjain and Dhar had faced riots over the Kamaal Moula mosque in the years 2005 and 2006. The Hindu activists claimed that the mosque was built in the place of the Hindu temple of Bhojshala. The Karbala ground, a piece of land in the city, also became a disputed site. The Shia Muslims used to celebrate Muharram in the Karbala ground. The Hindu activists began to claim that an old Hanuman temple was there in the ground.⁴⁷⁷ At the same time, an announcement was made by the Jammu and Kashmir government, on May 2008, that 100 acres of forest land would be transferred to the Amarnath temple, a famous shrine in Kashmir region, for the benefit of Hindu pilgrims. This announcement created unrest in the Kashmir. The local people were concerned about the ecological consequences, while Muslims saw it as an attack on their culture. The land transfer order was revoked by the

⁴⁷⁵ “What is Yogi Adityanath’s Hindu Yuva Vahini?” *The Indian Express*, Oct. 13, 2018. <https://indianexpress.com/article/what-is/what-is-yogi-adityanaths-hindu-yuva-vahini/>. Accessed on 12/10/2018.

⁴⁷⁶ Apoorvanand, “Riot, manufactured in Gorakhpur,” *Communalism Watch*, Feb. 14, 2007. <https://communalism.blogspot.com/2007/02/riot-manufactured-in-gorakhpur.html>. Accessed on 12/10/2018. Cr. “Riot in Gorakhpur: a preliminary report,” Jan. 30, 2007. http://www.milligazette.com/dailyupdate/2007/200701302_riots_gorakhpur_communal_politics.htm. Accessed on 12/10/2018.

⁴⁷⁷ Jaya Mehta and Vineet Tiwary, “Communal violence in Indore,” *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 43, No.30, Jul. 26, 2008. p. 10.

state government on 1 July 2008. The Sangh Parivar, agitated by the government's decision, called for a *bandh* (strike) all over the country on 3 July.⁴⁷⁸

The issue rocked the entire country. In Indore, the Sangh Parivar and *bandh* supporters entered into Muslim areas and attacked the Muslims. The police allegedly did not take any actions against the rioters during the incidents. This enraged the Muslims; as a result, they attacked a local police station. The *bandh* supporters joined with police and struck back. The violence continued for two days. Seven Muslims and one Hindu died in this violence. There was a curfew imposed in the city for five days.⁴⁷⁹

5.9 Conclusion

As described in this chapter, most of the communal violence incidences were instigated by the Sangh Parivar to achieve their *Hindutva* goal through political power. The primary aim of the Sangh Parivar to hold religious processions or *yatras* was to stimulate the majority Hindu's sentiments in order to polarise them against the minority communities and to enlist them as their party voters. Advani's *Rathayatra* created a great impact on the political arena at the beginning of the 1990s. The religious issue of the Babri Masjid–Ramjanmabhoomi was used for political gain by the Sangh Parivar. On 6 December 1992, when the Babri Masjid was demolished, the Hindu fundamentalists celebrated it all over India as a victory over Muslims which naturally provoked the Muslims to enter into conflict with their Hindu neighbours.

The organisers of the Hindu *yatras* always ensured to pass through the religious minorities' areas to showcase their dominance over them by shouting humiliating slogans. Earlier, different religious communities lived together peacefully with better mutual understanding and respected each other's customs and traditions during festivals. But after 1992, the Sangh Parivar established their units in every cities and villages, and spread the hate messages against the religious minorities. So, the harmonious living together of the different communities has since been disturbed, and they resorted to violence even for petty reasons. Every issue, irrespective of its nature, is turned into a religious issue.

The State of Gujarat was the first one to be polarised communally. The BJP leader Narendra Modi who became the Chief Minister of Gujarat efficiently polarised

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid.,

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid., 11.

through various programmes and boldly used the government machinery to suppress the minorities. In the 2002 riots, the police and the administration allegedly acted against the minority communities, and hundreds of people were killed. Through that event, Narendra Modi became a national leader and considered as a strong leader of the nation. His divisive model was followed in other North Indian states, particularly in Uttar Pradesh. The literacy rate in the North Indian states is much lower than that of the states in South India. The Sangh Parivar capitalises this to religiously polarise and control the population. For this reason, the Sangh Parivar is well rooted in North Indian states. The Sangh Parivar feels the threat of being outnumbered by the Muslims. According to the *Hindutva* ideology, both Muslim and Christian minorities are considered as outsiders and threats to the Hindu nation. The Muslims, being more in number than the Christians, often retaliated against any persecution in the hands of Hindus, whereas the Christians always remained submissive. So, whenever clashes take place between Hindus and the minorities, the Muslims suffered more damage and casualty than the Christians.

The history of the major riots in India had political backgrounds. The communal riots in different parts of India in different times had instigated by the organisations which had their political affiliation. However, the Sangh Parivar realised the potency of religion to polarise the communities and effectively provoked the religious sentiments of the Hindus particularly during the time of elections. On several occasion, the Hindu officials and the police allegedly acted against the minorities during communal violence. The Sangh Parivar successfully implemented these strategies during its experimental exercise to polarise the communities in Kandhamal to subjugate the minority communities during the 2008 riots.

The Sangh Parivar had objected to the alleged religious conversion being carried out in Kandhamal. Even during the riots, they were focused on converting Christians to Hinduism. According to them, the number of Christians was growing fast, and they wanted to resist the conversion through reconversion and by creating a fear psychosis among the people of Kandhamal to stop them from converting to Christianity.

CHAPTER SIX

THE RISE OF HINDU NATIONALISM AND OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNALISM IN KANDHAMAL, ODISHA

6.1 Introduction

Indian national tradition consists of various regional traditions. A region involves the integration of historical, linguistic, cultural, social and structural kind of variables. Hence, it is significant to know how the ideology of *Hindutva* (Hinduness) manifests itself in different contexts. This chapter deals with the cultural, social and political situations of Odisha at the time of the entry of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and how the Sangh Parivar strategically established its ideology in Odisha.

Most of the territories of Kandhamal are occupied by the people who speak the Odia language. They were brought together to form the Odisha province in 1936, which was also known as the Hindu province.⁴⁸⁰ The census, which polarised religious identity in the Odisha province, indicated that Odisha as predominantly Hindu. According to the 1991 census, the Hindu population of Odisha was 94.67%. The census helped the RSS to regard Odisha as a Hindu province, so the RSS tried to fit *Hindutva* ideology into the existing structure. Odisha comprises mainly of two regions: the coastal plains and the highlands.⁴⁸¹ The coastal area and the river valleys were the homes of temples and monuments, testifying to the indigenous architectural work. This region was the hub of Brahmanical traditions and the rituals of ceremonial purity. The dominant caste Hindus dominated the lives of the subaltern lower castes and untouchables.⁴⁸² In the highlands, a large tribal population lived in the forest. Tribals/Adivasis constituted one-fourth of the state population. These tribals had their own gods and goddesses and their own rituals.⁴⁸³ Odisha could preserve its indigenous cultural identity because of the geographical and topographical nature.⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁸⁰ Biswamoy Pati, *Resisting Domination: Peasants, Tribals and the National Movements in Orrisa 1920–50* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1993), 241.

⁴⁸¹ Mano Mohan Ganguly, *Orissa and Her Remains: Ancient and Medieval* (Patna: Eastern Book House, 1987), 6.

⁴⁸² W.F.B. Laurie, *Orissa, the Garden of Superstition and Idolatry* (Calcutta: R.N. Bhattacharya, 2000), 11.

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁴⁸⁴ N.K. Saku, *A History of Orrisa*, Vol. I (Calcutta: Sushil Gupta, 1956), 5.

6.2 Theory of Hindu nationalism

Hindu identity is a conjoint creation of both contemporary construction and the givens of the past. The Semitic religions are reconstructed by some of the newly emerged cultural symbols and values. Some of the symbols and values are revived. On the one hand, it is this past–present linkage that gives the new identity its vitality and, on the other, its ambiguity and ambivalence. There are a series of Hindu identities and not just one ideal type. There are three most prominent Hindu identities.

Firstly, Hindus are the original inhabitants of Hindustan (India). The life values, ideals and culture of this country is built by them. Hindus are being a people of a designated land.⁴⁸⁵ Secondly, Hindus are all those who pursue religions of Indian origin, including all native primal visions.⁴⁸⁶ This conceptualisation is a political one designed to avoid possible conflicts between religions of Indian origin. The third conceptualisation of Hindu is more restrictive and substantially exclusivist. It includes only the people who come under the *Varna* (caste) system. It excludes the untouchables, tribals and the Dravidian race of South India.⁴⁸⁷ This definition accepts the division among the Hindus as well as different ‘nations’ in India. The caste and linguistic elements invoked in defining Hinduism erode the prominence of religions. Hence, a Hindu is defined in three different ways: territory, religion, and caste or language. Based on these theories, the RSS, Viswa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Sangh Parivar groups tried to establish a Hindu nationalistic spirit among the Adivasis/tribals in Kandhamal, Odisha.

6.3 The impact of Jagannath of Puri

The gods of the Brahmanical Hinduism were worshipped along with the minor deities outside of the Brahmanical pantheon. The most significant feature of the pantheon, however, was the unique position of Jagannath (Lord of the Universe) of Puri in the religio-cultural and political traditions of Odisha. Though Puri was the chief seat of Brahmanical power in east India, Jagannath had a strong tribal connection. Originally, Jagannath was worshipped by the Munda tribe as Neelamadhaba in the Neelakandara.

⁴⁸⁵ D.R. Goyal, *Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh* (Delhi: Radhakrishna, 1979), 40.

⁴⁸⁶ V.D. Sarvakar, *Hindutva* (New Delhi: Bharat Sahitya Sadan, 1949), 104.

⁴⁸⁷ T. K.Oommen, *State and Society in India: Studies in Nation Building* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1990), 43.

6.3.1 The map of Odisha State with districts



6.3.2 Picture of the Puri Jagannath temple



The iconography of Jagannath is an evidence of the tribal origin. Etymologically, *Madala Panji*⁴⁸⁸ had its root in the Mundari⁴⁸⁹ word '*mudala*', meaning 'to establish with evidence'.⁴⁹⁰ The Hinduisation of Odisha incorporated the traditions of both Brahmanical Hinduism and the tribal cults. In the middle of the twelfth century, the Jagannath temple was built at Puri by Anatavarman Codaganga, a Saivite, based on political considerations. From the beginning, the cult of Jagannath was conceived as a legitimising factor for the rulers of Odisha.⁴⁹¹

The Odisha province was divided into several political and administrative units during the periods of the Mughals, Marathas and British. However, throughout these periods, Jagannath remained the collective regional and ethnic identity of the Oriyas. Jagannath became a crucial unifying symbol of the Oriyas.⁴⁹² In the late nineteenth century, there was a quest for uniting the Oriya-speaking areas into a single territory. During this time, two other variants of Hindu and Indian identities also emerged. Odisha experienced the interplay of these three different identities that developed three forms of nationalism: Oriya, Hindu and Indian.⁴⁹³

6.4 *Hindutva* and the Jagannath culture in Odisha

The RSS considered the Jagannath–Oriya–Hindu–Indian interconnection as an ideal framework for spreading *Hindutva* in Odisha. This framework utilised the positive implications of the development of the Jagannath cult by the pre-colonial, colonial and the Oriya Hindu upper-caste middle class. It also utilised the symbolic importance of the Jagannath cult in the religious, social, cultural and political life of the Oriyas. The Jagannath culture was depicted as the culture of Odisha, which suppressed and dominated all the other small sects and traditions.⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁸⁸ It is a chronicle of the Jagannath temple, Puri, Odisha, India. It describes the historical events of Odisha related to Jagannath and the Jagannath Temple. The *Madala Panji* dated back to the twelfth century.

⁴⁸⁹ Mundari is a language of Munda tribe.

⁴⁹⁰ Hermann Kulke and Burkhard Schnepel, eds. *Jagannath Revisited: Studying Society, Religion and the State in Orissa* (New Delhi: Ishita Banerjee Dube, 2001), 27.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁴⁹² B.C. Ray, *New Lights on Maratha Orissa* (Bhubaneswar: L Ray, 1993), 20.

⁴⁹³ Bishnu Narayan Mohapatra, *The Politics of Oriya Nationalism 1903–1936* (London: Oxford University, 1990), 187.

⁴⁹⁴ Anncharlott Eschmann et al. eds. *The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1986), 26.

The RSS cleverly implanted its *Hindutva* ideology in the Jagannath culture. It characterised Jagannath as a tribal (*Vanavasi*) deity and declared Odisha as a *Vanavasi* state. The Oriyas are proud to claim that they retain their tribal characteristic of primitive innocence, simplicity and honesty. This portrayal of Odisha easily influenced the poor, illiterate, religious and non-assertive people of this economically backward state. Actually, the characteristics of the people of Odisha were not fixed and immutable. It was very much changing due to natural calamities and change of religious and political dominance over the years. But the RSS gently portrayed Odisha as an unspoiled, pure and innocent *Vanavasi* identity.

The RSS further boasted that *bhakti* (devotion) constituted the core of the Jagannath culture and that the Oriyas were devout Hindus. Devotion to the nation is part of the *Hindutva* ideology, which they imposed on the Oriya tradition. The Jagannath tradition of *bhakti* emphasised *puja* (worship), *bhajan* (devotional song), *upavas* (fasting), self-realisation of god and personal salvation. But they did not have a similar devotion to the nation. The RSS continually tried to channel the devotional and spiritual energy of the Oriyas towards *Hindutva*.⁴⁹⁵

The Jagannath tradition had an inclusive nature which allowed the maximum philosophical and ontological freedom to the devotees. Philosophically, Jagannath symbolised that everything was broad and universal. Jagannath was the god of the downtrodden. He came out from the temple by the *Ratham* (Chariot) during the time of festival and moved around the streets breaking the barriers of caste, creed and religion. On the contrary, *Hindutva* propagated a limited vision of the saffron brotherhood and universalism which was not embraced by all the Hindu sects and traditions. It also demanded the complete surrender of the devotees to the Hindu nation.⁴⁹⁶

The RSS trained its followers to tread the ordinary path into the dark world of desire, conflict, hatred and otherness. The RSS claimed that their *Hindutva* ideology promotes harmony and universalism as promoted by the Jagannath cult. Though every Hindu sect had a place under the Jagannath cult, there was also an extended list of

⁴⁹⁵ Pralay Kanungo, "Hindutva's entry into a 'Hindu province': early years of RSS in Orissa," *The Economics and Political Weekly* (Aug.2, 2003), 2.

⁴⁹⁶ W.W. Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal: District of Puri and the Orissa Tributary States*, Vol. XIX, Reprint (Delhi: D. K. Publishing Company, 1976), 40.

exclusion. Muslims, Christians, Jews and also the low-caste Hindus, particularly the meat-eating aboriginals, were restricted to enter into the Jagannath temple.⁴⁹⁷

6.5 Emergence of communal politics in Odisha

In February 1938, the Muslim League⁴⁹⁸ opened a branch in Cuttack, Odisha. In May of the same year, they organised the Muslim students' conference at Cuttack. The Jamai-ai-ulema organised a meeting in Salepur, Cuttack District in December 1938. These activities of Muslims provoked Hindus to open the branch of Hindu Mahasabha on 24 January 1940 at Puri.⁴⁹⁹ The Hindu Mahasabha was against the non-violence policy of the Congress Party, and it encouraged the Hindu youth to join the army. The Mahasabha leaders were keen to strengthen the organisations like the Ram Sena (Army of Ram) for the advancement of military power, and they insisted on establishing a national military unit in every district to protect the legitimate interests of Hindus. On 15 May 1942, the Muslim League opened a branch of the Defence Committee which would safeguard the interest of Muslims and appealed to the Muslim youth to enrol.⁵⁰⁰

In May 1944, the All India Hindu Dharma Seva Sangha was formed in Puri. The Sangha also had a militant nature and called the Hindu youth to enrol in the army in large numbers, so that they would compete with Muslims in military achievements.⁵⁰¹ Some Muslims in Cuttack characterised the Congress as a Hindu political party and responsible for observing the Direct Action Day on 16 August 1946. Direct Action Day, also known as the Great Calcutta Killings, was a day of widespread riot and killing between Hindus and Muslims in the city of Calcutta in the Bengal province of British India. The Muslim League called for public meetings and

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid., 42.

⁴⁹⁸ "The All India Muslim League was formed at Dacca on 30 December 1906. The aims and objects of the League was to promote, among the Muslim of India, feelings of loyalty to the British government; to remove any misconception that might arise as to the intension of the Government with regard to many of its measures; to protect and advance the political rights and interest of the Muslims of India; to respectfully represent their needs and aspirations to the Government; and to prevent the rise among Muslims of any feeling of hostility towards other communities without prejudice to the other aforementioned objects of the League." S.S. Pirzada, ed. *Foundation of Pakistan: All India Muslim League Documents 1906–1924*, Vol. 1 (Karachi: 1968), 6.

⁴⁹⁹ H. K. Mahtab, ed. *History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa*, Vol. IV (Cuttack: State Committee for Compilation of History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa, 1957), 55.

⁵⁰⁰ Sushil Chandra, comp. *Diary of Political Events in Orissa 1936–1964* (Bhubaneswar: The Committee for Compilation of the Freedom Movement, 1966), 51.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid., 55.

processions in Sambalpur and Balasore in order to support the creation of Pakistan⁵⁰² for Muslims.⁵⁰³

There were riots in East Bengal and Kolkata in October 1946 where Muslims were dominant. As a reaction to the riots, a section of Odisha Hindus proposed to form a Hindu militant group and set up a Defence Committee in each village. They printed leaflets in Odia to boycott Muslims in all respects and distributed them to Hindus which created panic among the minority Muslims in Odisha.⁵⁰⁴ In 1947, the Muslim League raised funds to establish their own press and for the creation of Pakistan. They also formed a committee to obtain Muslim membership in the constituent assembly from Odisha. The Hindu–Muslim tension in Odisha was primarily a consequential effect of the communal situations outside Odisha. Not all Muslims in Odisha were supporters of the communal policy of the Muslim League.⁵⁰⁵ Similarly, the majority of Hindus rejected the communal politics of the Hindu Mahasabha. There were occasional eruptions of communal tensions, but there was no incident of bloodshed recorded in the history of Odisha due to religious communal violence till 1949.⁵⁰⁶

6.6 The Sangh Parivar’s entry into Odisha

The RSS was active and expanding its activities in the west, northwest and Northern India during the 1940s. After Mahatma Gandhi’s assassination on 30 January 1948, the RSS was banned. A large number of RSS activists were arrested all over India which created panic among its sympathisers in Odisha. On 11 July 1949, the Government of India overturned the proscription on the RSS under certain conditions. Soon after the overturning of the proscription, the RSS declared Odisha as a separate *Prant* (Province)

⁵⁰² “The Muslim League leaders felt that Muslim minorities were comfortable under the British rule. The Indian National Congress was dominated by Hindu fundamental leaders. The Hindu Mahasabha was working against Muslims. Since Muslims were loyal to the British, majority of the Hindu leaders were not happy with the Muslims. From 1933 onwards, the Muslim League was working for the partition of India because they thought that it would be difficult to survey under the majority Hindus. When India’s independence was confirmed by the Viceroy in June 1947, the Muslim League claimed the majority Muslim region to be declared as Pakistan. On 14 August 1947, the new Islamic Republic of Pakistan born under the leadership of Muhammad Ali Jinnah. India got its independence on 15 August 1947.” Uma Kaura, *Muslims and Indian Nationalism: The Emergence of the Demand for India’s Partition 1928–40* (New Delhi: Manohar Book Service, 1977), 136.

⁵⁰³ Op. cit., Sushil Chandra, 62.

⁵⁰⁴ Op. cit., H. K. Mahtab, 133.

⁵⁰⁵ Op. cit., Sushil Chandra, 30.

⁵⁰⁶ H. K. Mahtab, *The History of Orissa*, Vol. II (Cuttack: Prajatantra Prachara Samiti, 1960), 456.

and deputed Baburao Paldhikar as the first *Prant Pracharak*⁵⁰⁷ (Province Propagandist).⁵⁰⁸

Paldhikar began to meet leading politicians, lawyers and educationists in Cuttack, Odisha. He started morning *shakha* (a Hindu theological school) at the Marwari Club ground of Manik Ghosh Bazar. He met Nilakantha Das, an important political leader who had links with Hindu Mahasabha and was expelled from the Congress in 1941 for his opposition to Gandhi's non-violence policy.⁵⁰⁹ Nilakantha Das was elected as the President of the Utkal Provincial Hindu Mahasabha in 1943. He helped the RSS to hold *shakhas* in his Navbharat Press ground at Banka Bazar, Cuttack. The RSS used his prominence by inviting him to preside it's over annual Vijaya Dasmī Utsav in October 1950 at Nagpur. Nilakantha's speech on that occasion not only authenticated the RSS ideology but also boosted them to work more vigorously in Odisha.⁵¹⁰

Other notable Oriya leaders who helped Paldhikar to establish *shakhas* in other cities were Prana Krishna Parija and Dinabandhu Sahu. Paldhikar strategically positioned an army of efficient Maharashtrian *pracharaks* in the cities of Balasore, Puri, Berhampur, Bolangir, Rourkela, Sambalpur and Sundargarh. The *pracharaks* of these cities interacted with the local leaders and established *shakhas* and recruited young boys for their innovative methods.⁵¹¹

The RSS in Odisha regularly organised public meetings and invited its central leaders to propagate its ideology and encourage the youth to join the organisation. In 1956, the RSS launched 51 days *Jan Samparak* (Public Relation) programme in order to commemorate the 51st birthday of Golwalkar by organising a big function in Baripada town in which many *Prant Pracharaks* (Area Propagandist) and *Prant Sanghchalaks* (Area Associations) participated.⁵¹² In 1964, Deendayal Upadhyay started the Odisha unit of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (Indian People's Association) in

⁵⁰⁷ "*Pracharak* is a Hindi word which means 'person who broadcasts information.' In the context of the RSS, it referred to a person who devoted their energy to the work of the RSS, committed to a life of celibacy and fidelity to *Hindutva*." Angana P. Chatterji, *Violent Gods Hindu Nationalism in India's Present* (New Delhi: Three Essays, 2009), 84.

⁵⁰⁸ Op. cit., Pralay Kanungo, "Hindutva's entry into a Hindu Province," 6.

⁵⁰⁹ Op. cit., H. K. Mahtab, 71.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 107.

⁵¹¹ Pralay Kanungo, *Pracharaks of Hindu Rashtra in Contemporary India*, Vol. I, No. 2, Apr.–Jun. 2002, 175.

⁵¹² Op. cit., Angana P. Chatterji, 84.

Jharsuguda. The RSS started an Odiya weekly named *Rashtra Deepa* in the same year to propagate its ideology. In 1966, the RSS undertook a signature campaign and reportedly collected more than 20 million signatures from around the country in favour of the Prevention of the Cow Slaughter Act. In 1967, the Odisha unit of Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) was established in Puri.⁵¹³

The Sangh Parivar entered into the tribal area of Kandhamal through the VHP and *Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram* (VKA) with the agenda of Hinduising the tribals and countering the activities of the Christian missionaries. From 1930 onwards, Christian missionaries from both Roman Catholics and Reform Churches were actively involved in evangelism. The VHP passed a resolution in 1966 to reconvert those who had left Hinduism. The intention of the VHP was to accustom the people residing in the hills and forests with the Hindu way of life and introduce simple ways of worship and devotion to Hindu deities and bringing them to the Hindu fold.⁵¹⁴ Lakshmanananda Saraswati⁵¹⁵ was appointed as Hindu missionary to the Kandhamal region in 1967.⁵¹⁶

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) led by the BJP formed the government in the centre in 1998 and ruled the country for the next five years. The Hindu fundamentalists became very active. In 1998, about 5000 Sangh Parivar activists attacked Christians in Ramgiri-Udaygiri villages in Gajapati District. The houses of Christians, their church, a police station, and several government vehicles were set fire and destroyed during the raid. The mob entered forcibly into the local jail, and two Christian prisoners were burned to death. On the night of 22 January 1999, a shocking incident took place in Manoharpur village, Keonjhar District, Odisha. Graham Staines (aged 58), an Australian missionary, his sons Philip and Timothy (aged 10 and 6, respectively) were burnt alive inside their vehicle while they were sleeping. Graham Staines had served as the Director of the Leprosy Mission in Baripada, in Mayurbhanj District, Odisha since 1965.⁵¹⁷

⁵¹³ Ibid., 85.

⁵¹⁴ Chetan Bhatt, *Hindu Nationalism: Origins, Ideologies and Modern Myths* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 182.

⁵¹⁵ Lakshmananda was born in Angul District, Odisha. He committed himself to be a *sanyasi* (monk) life at the age of 25. He stayed and meditated in the Himalayas for a few years. He returned to Odisha to take part in anti-cow slaughter and anti-conversion movements and continued social works among the tribals and Dalits of Kandhamal.

⁵¹⁶ Op. cit., Angana P. Chatterji, 85.

⁵¹⁷ Sukumar Muralidharan and Venkitesh Ramakrishnan, "Undermining India," *Frontline*, Vol. 16, No. 3. Jan. 30–Feb. 12 1999. <http://www.frontline.in/navigation/?type=static&page=archive>. Accessed on 24/10/2017.

The Sangh Parivar established about 40 major organisations with numerous branches operating in every level of society in Odisha. In 1989, Lakshmanananda established his second *ashram* at Jalaspata in Kandhamal. He also co-opted existing social tensions between the Konds and Panas onto a religious nationalist framework. He also promoted the reconversion ceremony as a form of *Shuddhi*. From 1998 onwards, the BJP, the political party of the Sangh Parivar, was in power with the coalition government of Odisha which gave them an opportunity to execute their *Hindutva* ideology throughout Odisha, particularly in Kandhamal. All these developments increased the enmity and conflict between the Hindus and Christians in Kandhamal during this period.

During these two decades, the whole political climate of the country was changed. The Sangh Parivar's political strategy was well worked out by raising the Ram temple issue and anti-minority activities throughout the nation. After the demolition of Babri Masjid in 1992, the whole nation was shaken and communalism was on the rise. In 2002, the Godhra incident again trembled the country, but this time the Sangh Parivar gained political mileage by winning the Gujarat State assembly election with a vast majority.⁵¹⁸ Since 1998, the BJP was part of the Odisha State government; the Sangh Parivar took advantage of their political power to suppress Christian activities in Odisha, particularly in Kandhamal.

By 2008, the Sangh Parivar consolidated their position and influence with the support of the institutions of the Government of Odisha and Hindu nationalists in the State. The RSS operated 6000 *shakhas* in Odisha with more than 175,000 cadres. The VHP had more than 150,000 primary workers, and the Bajrang Dal had more than 60,000 activists working as leaders in the State. The Sangh Parivar established about 40 major organisations with numerous branches operating in every level of society, ranging and connecting from villages to cities to Hinduise Odisha.⁵¹⁹ From 1998 to 2009, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the political party of Sangh Parivar, was in power with the coalition government of Odisha and got the government support to execute their *Hindutva* ideology throughout Odisha. The religious and political

⁵¹⁸ In the total number of seats 182, BJP won in 127 seats and the others shared the rest. <http://www.elections.in/gujarat/assembly-constituencies/2002-election-results.html>. Accessed on 11/10/2017.

⁵¹⁹ Final Report by National People's Tribunal on Kandhamal, Aug. 2010, New Delhi, p. 10.

development of the State of Odisha impacted on Kandhamal, since it was a part of the Odisha State.

6.7 The activities of Hindu fundamentalists in Kandhamal

Lakshmanananda Saraswati established his first ashram in 1969 at Chakapada, Kandhamal. He organised religious congregations once or twice a year in order to attract tribals to religious practices. He claimed that ‘the tribal Konds are Hindus’; he systematically introduced *satsangs* (sacred gathering) and *yagyas* (a sacrificial rite), Hindu gods and goddesses, Hindu scriptures and mode of worship. He organised mega religious congregations attracting and mobilising the Konds in a big way. He gave them hope under the larger Hindu identity by giving them new names of Hindu gods.⁵²⁰ He started a model farm and a state-aided school where he conducted daily *shakhas*. He also established hostels, dispensaries and night schools with the help of the VHP. Beyond introducing religious rituals and philanthropy work, Lakshmanananda defined and promoted the identity of Hindu against the Christians as ‘others’ in Kandhamal. The Sangh Parivar promoted the perception of a binary opposition between Hinduism and Christianity. Hinduisation and projection of Christians as ‘outsiders’ were the two-pronged strategies of the Sangh Parivar.⁵²¹

Lakshmanananda propagated the idea that the Christian missionaries were the main threat to the tribal identity and that they opposed nature worship and the local culture. He became a resisting force against the Christians who were converting people. In the meantime, he promoted Hindu rituals among the tribals who were animist. He organised anti-Christian religious ceremonies and rallies in Kandhamal. He started *yagna* at Katingia village in 1980 to launch his hate campaign against Christians. ‘*Yagna*’ (Sacrifice) is a Vedic rite. The enmity between the Hindus and Christians in Kandhamal was created by his inflammatory speeches.⁵²²

In 1989, he established a second *ashram* at Jalaspata. His plan for Kandhamal consisted in appealing to the Konds by addressing the local issues in a discourse. He framed the existing social problems onto a religious nationalist template. Since the Pana Christians were more in number, Lakshmanananda made use of the conflict interests

⁵²⁰ Pralay Kanungo, “Hindutva’s Fury against Christians in Orrisa,” *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 43, No. 37, Sep. 2008. p. 16.

⁵²¹ Op. cit., Angana P. Chatterji, 109.

⁵²² Angana P. Chatterji and Mihir Desai, eds. *Communalism in Orissa: Report of the Indian People’s Tribunal* (Mumbai: Indian People’s Tribunal, 2006), 46.

between the Konds and the Panas.⁵²³ On 14 January 1994, a Pana youth entered a Shiva temple at Khudutentuli which led to violent clashes between the Konds and the Panas, followed by a temple purification organised by the Konds.⁵²⁴ This purification ceremony was as decreed by the Brahminic Hinduism which created a caste-based identity among the tribal Konds. In the competition over land rights and political power, the Konds' attitude towards the Panas turned into a political project.

The Sangh Parivar in Kandhamal also exploited the competition over reservations in higher studies and employment to propagate communalism on the basis of religious identity. The Scheduled Castes (SCs) benefits were restricted for Hindus only. Once a person converted to Christianity or Islam, he/she was not eligible to get the benefits of the SCs. The Panas who had converted to Christianity were ineligible to get the benefits of SCs. For this reason, some Pana Christians kept their religion as Hindu in order to get the SC benefits.⁵²⁵ The bitterness further increased when an Act was passed in 2002 which inserted the term 'Kui' into the list of Scheduled Tribes (STs) in Odisha. The Kui-speaking Panas claimed the ST status. Lakshmanananda strongly supported the Konds and protested against the Panas, as a result of which the Konds started to hate the Panas, particularly the Christians. He succeeded in turning the Konds against the Christians in Kandhamal.⁵²⁶

Lakshmanananda used both anti-conversion and reconversion as a form of *Shuddhi* (*Shuddhi* is a ceremony). In *Shuddhi*, the tribals were admitted into the Hindu fold as Sudras. Sudras were in the bottom level of the caste hierarchy system. They were given a new surname in the names of the Hindu gods. Christians were forcefully admitted into Hinduism through a *Shuddhi* ceremony.⁵²⁷ The communal tensions were kept alive, largely by spreading the fear of conversion to Christianity.

The Sangh Parivar vigorously worked among the tribals in Odisha and organised *yatras* (procession) rallies in different districts and converted the tribal Christians. On 8–10 April 2006, the RSS and VHP organised a big rally and conference

⁵²³ David Griffiths, *Conversion, Re-Conversion and Violence in Central Orissa* (School of Oriental and African Studies, 2010), 33.

⁵²⁴ Biswamoy Pati, "Orissa: Re-convert or Die," *Teelka* 5:2(Jan. 2008).

⁵²⁵ Op. cit., David Griffiths, *Conversion, Re-Conversion...*, 35.

⁵²⁶ Op. cit., Angana P. Chatterji, *Violent Gods...*, 89.

⁵²⁷ Op. cit., Pralay Kanungo, "Hindutva's entry into a...," 174.

at Chakapad. A total of 342 Christians from 74 families converted to Hinduism in that conference in the presence of the State government ministers.⁵²⁸

6. 8 The initial incidents (1983–1985)

The Hindus and Christians in Kandhamal lived peacefully as good neighbours without any conflicts. There is no record of any communal violence in Kandhamal till the year 1980. Swami Lakshmanananda organised a ‘*Nama Yajna*’⁵²⁹ at Kattingia village in G. Udayagiri Block, Kandhamal in 1980 which constituted the first attack on people of different religions living in harmony until then. Kattingia Church, which was established in 1883, was the first Roman Catholic Church in Odisha. Christians and Hindus (250 and 45 families, respectively) lived together in the village in 1983.⁵³⁰ In 1980, Lakshmanananda launched his hate campaign against the Christians in the *Yajna* that he organised by delivering a series of inflammatory speeches. The ‘*Nama Yajna*’ at Kattingia resulted in bringing about suspicions and misunderstandings between the communities.⁵³¹

6.8.1 Early divisions

Roman Bastray, a Christian teacher from Kattingia who survived from a murderous attack in 1988 violence, recalled that at the beginning of the year 1983, the idol of Gramaya Devata, the god of Kattingia village was dislocated, which created tension between the Christians and Hindus. The Hindus accused two Christian youths and filed a case against them. A meeting was called, but it failed to settle the issue. The court declared that the two Christian boys were innocent. But the Hindu community members were not happy with the judgement.⁵³² In the same year during the time of Dola Purnima⁵³³ festival, hundreds of Hindus along with the local police marched towards

⁵²⁸ JPDC, ed. *Faith under Fire* (Delhi: Media House, 2008), 371.

⁵²⁹ “A ‘nama-yajna’ is exclusively for the pleasure of the Lord Krishna, and doing it, all participants can become priests. *Yajna* (*yajña*) is a Sanskrit word, literally means “sacrifice, devotion, worship, offering” and refers in Hinduism to any ritual done in front of a sacred fire, often with mantras.” ISKCON, *The Sacrifice of Nama Yajna*, Sep.10, 2010. <http://www.iskcondesiretree.com/profiles/blogs/the-sacrifice-of-nama-yajna>. Accessed on 29/07/2017.

⁵³⁰ Ranjit Bagchi, “Hindus and Christians at Loggerheads in Orissa Village” Op. cit., JPDC, 194.

⁵³¹ Anselm Biswal, “Swami Lakhmananda First Bared His Fangs in Kattingia in 1980s,” Ibid., JPDC, 183.

⁵³² Roman Bastray, “Roman Bastray Survived a Murderous attack in Kattingia in the 1988s, and Lives to tell his tale,” Op. cit., JPDC, 190.

⁵³³ “Dola Purnima is major Hindu festival in Odisha. This festival is dedicated to Sri Krishna. On this auspicious day, an image of Krishna and Radha richly adorned and is taken out in procession, decorated with flowers, leaves, coloured clothes and papers. The procession proceeds forward to the accompaniment of music, blaring of crackers and shouts of Jai (victory).” Naveen Sanagala, *Dola*

the Kattingia Church to offer *Puja* (Ritual) in the Convent premises. The Assistant Sub-Inspector of Police, Bamunigam police station in Brahmanigaon Block, asked the parish priest, Fr. Ajit Toppo, to allow the Hindus to offer *Puja* in the Convent ground claiming that the land belonged to the Hindu communities and it was their traditional worshipping place. Since it was the Passion Week, Fr. Toppo and the congregation members were also planning a special mass in the church. They resisted the offering of *Puja* in the Convent premises and proposed that the issue needed to be sorted out by a peace committee. So, the police did not allow the Hindus to perform *Puja* inside the compound. The angry mass pelted stones at the church and threatened to attack Christians some other time. In the meantime, the matter was taken to the court. The verdict was in favour of the church, and the Hindus were asked not to claim the land.⁵³⁴

In May 1984, 94 Christian houses were burnt down in Kattingia. The Christians suspected that the activists from the Hindu community were behind the arson. But the police failed to arrest the culprits. Hostility between the two communities continued in Kattingia.⁵³⁵ The Hindus celebrated Dola Purnima annually with great enthusiasm to create pressure on the Christian community. On 7 May, Sadhu Kisan Singh,⁵³⁶ an evangelist from Punjab, came to Barakhama village in Balliguda Block along with his sister Shanta Kaur to preach the Gospel. He was attacked by Hindu fundamentalists and asked to leave Kandhamal immediately.⁵³⁷ It is reported that in August, the churches in Gudriki in Brahmanigaon Block and Simonbadi under the Daringbadi Block were destroyed and burned down by the Sangh Parivar. On 25 November, two churches in Simonbadi were attacked. On 10 December, Kishore Nayak from Balliguda was assaulted by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) activists.⁵³⁸

Similarly, on 12 December, Kasian Montri from Sikeketa village under Daringbadi Block was mercilessly beaten by the RSS cadres. On 13 December, the

Purnima 2017, Dol Poornima Holi Festival of Orissa. <http://hindupad.com/dola-purnima-dol-poornima-holi-festival-in-orissa/>. Accessed on 29/07/2017.

⁵³⁴ Anselm Biswal, "Swami Lakhmananda First Bared His Fangs in Kattingia in 1980s," Op. cit., JPDC, 184.

⁵³⁵ Ibid.

⁵³⁶ Sadhu K. Singh was a famous evangelist from Punjab who converted from Sikhism. He had a powerful testimony which really challenged the people of other faiths. Jivi Jebaraj, "Salvation enables resources at hand," <http://serahindia.blogspot.in/2011/08/sadhu-kishan-singh-man-who-suffered-for>. Accessed on 09/04/2018.

⁵³⁷ Interview with Elio Nayak and Tunakumar Nayak on 29/10/2016. Cf. Anselm Biswal, "Swami Lakhmananda first bared his fangs in Kattingia in 1980s," Op. cit., JPDC, 184.

⁵³⁸ Interview with Pramod Nayak and Haramoni Digal on 29/01/2018. Cf. Ibid., 184.

churches in Kusukupda and Dabeni villages of Tikabali Block were burnt down. On 14 December, Niranjana Singh of Alanjorivillage in Brahmanigaon Block was attacked and tied to a tree and thrashed by the RSS members. On 17 December, the churches in Balliguda Block at Brudakia, Salakia and Daringbadi were attacked by local Hindu fundamentalists, the RSS and the Viswa Hindu Parishad (VHP) under the leadership of Swami Lakshmanananda.⁵³⁹ On 24 December, at Bostingia village in Tikabali Block, Christian people participating in night prayers were attacked by a mob, and the mob also robbed their musical instruments. On 25 December, there was an attack on Christians who were on a peaceful Christmas day procession at Simonbadi. On the following day, Jitendra Pradhan from the same village was brutally attacked by the RSS cadres. On 31 December, a church was attacked with a bomb in Daringbadi while some Christians were observing night prayers. Pastor Saroj Digal was severely beaten up by the RSS cadres in December. Hindu fundamentalists also burned Phulbani presbytery, and they threatened the parish priest to leave the place immediately.⁵⁴⁰

In 2002, the VHP converted 5000 people to Hinduism. In 2003, the Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram organised a rally in Bhubaneswar in which 15,000 members participated, propagating that tribal and Dalit converts to Christianity be denied affirmative action. In 2004, seven women and a male pastor were forcibly tonsured in Kilipal, Jagatsinghpur District, and a social and economic ban was imposed upon them. A Catholic Church was vandalised, statues of Mary and Jesus were destroyed, and the Christian community was targeted in Raikia. In 2005, Gilbert Raj, a Baptist pastor, was murdered, and Dilip Dalai, a Pentecostal pastor, was stabbed to death at his residence in Begunia, Khordha District.⁵⁴¹

During this period, the Sangh Parivar established and strengthened their organisations in every village of Odisha particularly in Kandhamal by recruiting new cadres under the leadership of Swami Lakshmanananda. The political wing of Sangh Parivar, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) established a mighty presence in Odisha. Lakshmanananda came to be recognised as a spiritual guru and became a politically

⁵³⁹ Interviewed Mark Digal, Sunita Nayak, and Haramoni Digal 03/11/2016. *Ibid.*, 184.

⁵⁴⁰ Interviewed Parmod Nayak and Indra Pati Pradhan on 29/01/2018. *Op. cit.*, JPDC, 366 -368.

⁵⁴¹ Angana Chatterji, "Orissa: Hindutva's violent history," *Tehelka Magazine*, Vol. 5, No. 35, Sep. 13, 2008. <http://www.sacw.net/DC/CommunalismCollection/ArticlesArchive/angana5sept08.html>. Accessed on 08/10/2017.

influential person. He used his power to motivate the local Hindus to act against Christians. Because of his constant preaching against Christians, the local Hindus began to hate Christians and started harassing the Christians in their respective villages. The Christians and the churches were mainly attacked during the time of festivals of either the Hindus or the Christians.

6.9 Series of attacks on the Christians from 1985

There were small and big episodes of religious violence that took place in and around the Kandhamal region before 1985. However, since this research is limited to the period between 1985 and 2010, it will only record the events that took place during this period in the Kandhamal region. Most of the events were not recorded anywhere, and even there was no media reference. People from a particular village could be able to recollect the past events but not be able to give detailed accounts with exact dates and reasons. Only the book *Faith under Fire* published by Media House contains some information regarding the violent events.

During the year 1986, the Baptist Church of Piserama near Raika of Kandhamal was attacked by the RSS in March. On 7 May, Sadhu Kisan Singh, an evangelist from Punjab, came to Barakhama village along with his sister Shanta Kaur to preach the Gospel. He was attacked by Hindu fundamentalists and asked to leave Kandhamal immediately. In August, churches in Gudrikiya and Simonbadi under the Balliguda Block were completely destroyed and burned down by the Sangh Parivar. On 25 November, two churches in Simonbadi were attacked. On 10 December, Kishore Nayak from Balliguda was assaulted by the RSS activists. Similarly, on 12 December, Kasian Montri from Sikeketa village was mercilessly beaten by the RSS cadres. On 13 December, the churches in Kusukupda and Doberi villages were burnt down. On 14 December, Niranjana Singh of Alanjuri village was attacked and tied to a tree and beaten by the RSS members of the village. On 17 December, the churches at Bodakia, Salakia and Daringbadi were attacked by the local Hindu fundamentalists, RSS and VHP under the leadership of Swami Lakshmanananda. On 24 December, Christians were attacked at Bostingia village while observing night prayers, and their musical instruments were taken away forcibly. On 25 December, there was an attack on the Christians who were on a peaceful Christmas day procession at Simonbadi. On the following day, Jitendra Pradhan from the same village was brutally attacked by the RSS cadres. On 31 December, a bomb was thrown at a church in Daringbadi while some Christians were

observing night prayers. Pastor Saroj Digal was brutally beaten up by the RSS cadres in December. Hindu fundamentalists also burned Phulbani presbytery, and they threatened the parish priest to leave the place immediately.⁵⁴²

On 10 December 1986, Kishore Nayak of Balliguda was assailed by RSS cadres. On 12 December, Kasian Mantri of Sikeketa village under Daringbadi Block was remorselessly attacked by the RSS cadres of Sikeketa village. On 14 December, Niranjani Singh of Alanjuri village faced brutal attacks – tied on a tree and beaten mercilessly – by the RSS members at Jhinjiriguda near Bamunigaon. On 24 December, at Bostingia village under Tikabali Block, Christians who were taking part in night prayers were attacked by a mob; their musical instruments were also robbed by the mob. On 25 December, Christians who were participating in a peaceful procession were attacked on Christmas day at Simonbadi under Daringbadi Block. On 26 December, Jitendra Pradhan of Simonbadi was mercilessly beaten.⁵⁴³

Violence continued during the year 1987 also. On 8 January, a group of men attempted to murder Rev. Susant Kumar Naik, Paul Pradhan and Bikram Digal near Mdiakia, and their bikes were damaged. On 11 January, Bena Nayak of Brahmanigam, a cook assisting in the church, was beaten by the RSS cadres, and he was admitted to a hospital with a head injury. On the same day, James Nayak from Jhinjiriguda was beaten up by the RSS members in the presence of Swami Lakshmanananda. On 17 January, the chapel at Burbinaju village was burned down by the RSS cadres. They drew RSS symbols and wrote anti-Christian slogans on the walls of the burned church. On 17 December, the RSS cadres destroyed the churches in Sarthaguda and Tuduvalli villages.⁵⁴⁴

According to Fr. Kulakanta, on 8 January 1987, Rev. Susant Kumar Naik, Paul Pradhan and Bikram Digal were brutally attacked by the RSS cadres near Raikia and their bikes were damaged.⁵⁴⁵ On 11 January, Bena Nayak of Brahmanigam, a cook assisting in the church, was beaten by the RSS cadres, and he was admitted to a hospital with a head injury. On the same day, James Nayak from Jhinjirigudain Brahmanigaon Block was beaten up by the RSS members in the presence of Swami

⁵⁴² JPDC, ed. *Faith under Fire* (Delhi: Media House, 2008), 366–368.

⁵⁴³ *Report by National People's Tribunal on Kandhamal*, New Delhi: 2010. P. 14.

⁵⁴⁴ *Op. cit.*, JPDC, 366–371.

⁵⁴⁵ Interview with Fr. Kulakanta, Priest of Raikia Roman Catholic Church on 31/10/2016. Cf: *Ibid.*, 371.

Lakshmanananda.⁵⁴⁶ On 17 January, the chapel at Burbinaju village in Tikabali Block was burned down by the RSS cadres and wrote anti-Christian slogans on the walls of the burned chapel. There were attacks on Christians in different parts of Odisha throughout the year. During the years 1986 and 1987, about 20 village churches were burned down in Kandhamal.⁵⁴⁷ On 17 December, the RSS cadres destroyed the churches in Sartaguda and Tudubali villages in Tikabali Block.⁵⁴⁸

There were attacks on Christians in different parts of Odisha throughout the year. Some are specifically recorded with details, while others are generally mentioned. During the years 1986 and 1987, about 20 village churches were burned down in Kandhamal.⁵⁴⁹ On 24 September 1988, a rumour was spread that Kanak Durga, the Hindu goddess' sword had been missing from Gramdebati temple at Kattingia for which the Hindus blamed some Christians. Charges were made against four Christians, and they were arrested and taken to Balliguda court. They were all freed as the allegations could not be substantiated. But the Hindus kept the issue burning and continued to plan to attack Christians.⁵⁵⁰

On 30 September 1988, the Circle Inspector of Police from Balliguda visited Kattingia village and considering the tense situation between the communities he promised to send more force. On Sunday of 2 October 1988, at around 3.00 pm, about 20 Hindu activists armed with guns and sharp weapons came to the village entrance shouting slogans against Christians and tried to pull down the cross to avenge for the stolen sword of the goddess. Members of the violent mob opened gunfire at the Christians when they attempted to prevent the desecration of the cross. Four Christians were seriously injured. The inspector of police Brahmanigaon was present along with four constables at the time when this incident was taking place. After the incident, the police disappeared from the site.⁵⁵¹

On the very next day, 3 October, at around 8 am, a mob of Hindus from neighbouring villages once again entered Kattingia. Kattingia was a village with a mixed

⁵⁴⁶ *Report by National People's Tribunal on Kandhamal*, New Delhi: 2010. P. 14. Cf. Op. cit., JPDC, 369.

⁵⁴⁷ Op. cit., JPDC, 366.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., 367.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁰ Anselm Biswal, "Swami Lakshmananda first bard his fangs in Kattingia in 1980s," Op. cit., JPDC, 184.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid., 185.

population of Roman Catholic Pana Christians as a majority and Hindu Konds as a minority, surrounded by Hindu villages where the RSS was very active. Kattingia was targeted by Lakshmanananda because of the progressive presence of Christians.⁵⁵² The mob was equipped with guns, swords, axes, sticks, etc. and shouted anti-Christian slogans. They entered the Christian houses and destroyed religious articles, vandalised properties and attacked the men. Four people were shot, and nine of them were stabbed. Roman Bastiray (aged 60), a retired Christian teacher was permanently paralysed as he was hit by an axe that damaged his brain. The Christians in Kattingia were shattered and terrorised. The men took flight to the jungle and the women and children took refuge in the convent. The local administration and police arrived at Kattingia the third day after the incident. The police charged 7 Hindu attackers and also 21 Christian victims for the violence. The attackers were freed from the jail within a few days, while the victims suffered in jail for more than three months.⁵⁵³

In the year 1988, nearly 18 village churches were destroyed, and Christians were tortured in various ways. On 2 and 3 October 1988, Christians were brutally attacked by the Sangh Parivar cadres at Katingia village. Eight Christians suffered from gunshots, and one person was seriously axed; all were admitted to the hospital, and their lives were saved.⁵⁵⁴

On 24 January 1989, the Sangh Parivar attacked the priest and vandalised the church at Sadingia village.⁵⁵⁵ On 4 February, Rukans Digal of Mala village was severely attacked and left unconscious. He was admitted to the hospital and saved.⁵⁵⁶ Apart from the attacks on Christians, there was a systematic arson and burning of churches of all denominations in villages like Sahaliguda, Duringpodi, Budaguda, Nuagam and Madhiguda.⁵⁵⁷

On 14 January 1994, at Khudutentuli in Khajuripada Block, a dispute raised over the entry of a Pana youth into a Shiva temple. The youth's entry into the temple was objected by some of the main Kond worshippers, and this led to a conflict because the Pana youth argued it is his right to enter the temple. The mutual stubbornness turned

⁵⁵² Interview with Pastor Haramoni Digal on 03/11/2016.

⁵⁵³ Op.cit., JPDC, 186.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid., 369.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid., 371.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid., 369.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid., 367.

into a riot between the Kondhs and Panas. It was a fight between tribals and Dalits over the latter's right to enter into the temple. The riots continued until June 1994, which cost 18 lives and led to relocation of a large number of Panas into the refugee camps located in Phulbani. On 6 April 1994, around 5000 Kondhs marched in a rally which was led by Lambodar Kanhar.⁵⁵⁸ On 26 August, Sheikh Rehman, aged 35, a trader, had been killed in Padiabeda village, Mayurbhanj District. On the night of 1 September 1999, Jacqueline Mary, a Catholic nun, was raped by a mob in Mayurbhanj; Arul Das, a Catholic priest, was attacked and murdered in Jamabani, Mayurbhanj District; and the churches were destroyed in Kandhamal.⁵⁵⁹

In 1997, Christians and their houses were attacked by the Sangh Parivar at Betticola village. In December 1998, 92 Christian houses, a church, a police station and various government vehicles were set afire in Ramgiri-Udaygiri.⁵⁶⁰ On 8 March 1999, a cross on the hillside near Ranalai was damaged by communal elements. A peace committee was formed to resolve the issue but on 16 March, a group forcibly erased the cross symbol, and a mob attacked Christians and burned their houses.⁵⁶¹ In 2000, Fr. Lamesh Kanhar was nearly murdered by a group of Hindu fundamentalists at Betticola village. Fortunately, some courageous women intervened and rescued him. An ambulance of the Missionary of Charity Brothers of Telapally was hijacked, damaged and dumped into a pond.⁵⁶²

In 2003, Fr. Laxmikant, the parish priest of Pobingia Parish, was attacked in Mala village.⁵⁶³ On 26 August 2004, Our Lady of Charity Catholic Church at Raikia was vandalised, and the figures of Mary and Jesus were shattered. Swami Lakshmanananda and his cadre forced the local market vendors to segregate Christians and not to sell anything to them. The Sangh Parivar infiltrated into tribal communities and instigated the tribals against Christians.⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁵⁸ Durang Basu Mallick, "Dossier on Kandhamal," (2010), 35. http://www.kandhamal.net/DownloadMat/Dossier_on_Kandhamal.pdf. Accessed on 28/04/2018.

⁵⁵⁹ Op. cit., Angana P. Chatterji, *Violent Gods*, 253. Kalyan Chaudhuri, "Another victim in Orissa," *Frontline*, Vol. 16, No. 19, Sep. 11–24, 1999. <http://www.frontline.in/navigation/?type=static&page=archive>. Accessed on 24/09/2017.

⁵⁶⁰ Op. cit., Angana P. Chatterji, *Violent Gods...*, 250.

⁵⁶¹ Ebe Sunder Raj and Sam Thambusamy, *Divide to Rule: A Documentation of Communal Attacks in India during 1997–1999 on Christians; Reasons, Allegations and Answers* (Chennai: Bharat Jyoti Publications, 2000), 19. Cf. Op. cit., JPDC, 367.

⁵⁶² Op. cit., JPDC, 369.

⁵⁶³ *Ibid.*, 370.

⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 367. Cf. Angana P. Chatterji, *Violent Gods...*, 256.

In Kandhamal, the Sangh Parivar under the leadership of Lakshmanananda was trying to suppress the Christians in the villages where Christians were the majority in number and became prominent and dominant. During this period, the violence was confined to particular villages which did not spread to other villages. Lakshmanananda strategically spread the hatred and tried to instigate violence through various means. For instance, the problem created in Kattinga village was projected as an issue of the Hindus of that area. The number of attacks on churches and Christians increased dramatically. Many were injured though there was no report of causality during the period. Various incidents took place at different locations in different times for different reasons, sometimes for reasons other than Christian identity. Lakshmanananda became a popular *Guru* among the tribals and Hindus in Kandhamal. He used violence as a means to create fear among the Christians and to polarise the Hindus.

6.10 Conclusion

Swami Lakshmanananda worked hard to establish the Sangh Parivar units in every village of the Kandhamal District. In order to make them active and work on their agenda, they started to attack individual Christian leaders and prayer houses. Introduction of new Hindu festivals and religious processions were used for mobilising the tribal community. They mobilised young Hindu activists to disturb Christians during their festival times. Once they started these activities, it became a regular activity of the Sangh Parivar with the support of local administration. They made use of each and every opportunity to harass Christians. When they stabilised their political power in the State, their strategy became bigger and wider.

In the early period, local issues triggered the violence, and it affected only a particular village or an area. But later, there was a strong element of the Sangh Parivar behind all the major episodes of violence. The Sangh Parivar made use of local issues and created enmity between Christians and the others. They particularly created fear among the majority tribal community by saying their welfare and identity were threatened by Christians.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ATTACKS ON CHRISTIANS IN KANDHAMAL FROM 2007 TO 2010

7.1 Introduction

Several episodes of religious violence, both big and small, took place in and around the region of Kandhamal from 1983.⁵⁶⁵ Although the current research is limited to the period between 1985 and 2010, it includes the period from 1983 in order to understand the background of the chosen period. Apart from the data collected by the researcher through face-to-face conversations, this study will be utilising other available data and reports. The first section of this chapter's analysis makes use of the sources that recorded the violent events in Odisha, particularly in Kandhamal District. The whole selected period of study is divided into three periods based on the time of incidents and frequency of the violent events. The first period covers the years between 1983 and 1985, the second period covers the years from 1986 to 2006.

7.2 Sources

There are many reports available in relation to violence that occurred in Kandhamal during 2007 and 2008. Some of these reports have been used as sources in this research. However, the authenticity of these sources is not verifiable. The researcher selected the available reports after careful analysis of the methodology and purpose of the reports. The events recorded in more than one source are generally considered reliable.

7.2.1 National People's Tribunal⁵⁶⁶

The report compiled by the National People's Tribunal on violence of Kandhamal is the first source – an outcome of the meeting held at the Constitution Club in the capital city of India from 22nd to 24th of August 2010. The National Solidarity Forum made arrangements for the meeting.⁵⁶⁷ The Tribunal's objective was to aid the victims and survivors of the 2008 violence in seeking justice, penalising the perpetrators, restoring peace, and restoring the right to a dignified life in their villages.

⁵⁶⁵ Anselm Biswal, "Swami Lakhmananda first bared his fangs in Kattingia in 1980s," JPDC, ed. *Faith under Fire* (Delhi: Media House, 2008), 183.

⁵⁶⁶ *National People's Tribunal on Kandhamal* (New Delhi: Constitution Club, 2010).

⁵⁶⁷ National Solidarity Forum is a countrywide solidarity platform of concerned social activists, media persons, researchers, legal experts, film makers, artist, writers, scientist and civil society organizations.

This report was prepared on the basis of written and oral statements of the victims. The Tribunal also took into account documents such as medical reports, court papers, available documents, and researches conducted on the violence in Kandhamal. The testimonies and depositions of victims and survivors of the violence were added on by 15 reports of field studies, research works, and investigations of various expert teams.

The Tribunal was led by Justice A. P. Shah, ex Chief Justice of the High Court, Delhi. The Tribunal's members were renowned scholars and social activists. Considering the methodology used by this Tribunal, this report has been taken as an authentic source for the present study.

7.2.2 Study of the conditions of women affected by communal violence in Kandhamal District, Orissa⁵⁶⁸

A study of the situation of women victims of communal violence by a group of scholars under the leadership of Nirmala Niketan – College of Social Work, Mumbai – is the second source. The main objectives of the study were to understand the hardships faced by women in the context of violence and to attract the attention of the civil society and government to the issues of the women victims.

Data collection and processing for the study were done professionally through qualitative and quantitative methods, wherein interviews and case studies were used to find out the facts. This study report, along with the data collected by the researcher through field study, will help in understanding the seriousness of the problem.

7.2.3 Faith under Fire⁵⁶⁹

The third source is the book titled *Faith under Fire*, which was edited and published by the Justice, Peace and Development Commission of the Church in Odisha relating to Kandhamal riots till February 2008. This book contains articles written by scholars like

⁵⁶⁸ Nirmala Niketan, *Study of the Conditions of Women Affected by Communal Violence in Kandhamal District, Orissa* (Mumbai: College of Social Work, 2010).

⁵⁶⁹ JPDC, ed. *Faith under Fire* (Delhi: Media House, 2008).

Asma Jehangir,⁵⁷⁰ Teesta Setalvad,⁵⁷¹ Angana Chatterji,⁵⁷² John Dayal,⁵⁷³ Ram Puniyani⁵⁷⁴ and others on Kandhamal violence between 24 and 27 December 2007. This book also recorded the early history of communal violence in Kandhamal and gives the chronicle of violent events in the whole of Odisha. Since the book contains a lot of original documents, it is useful for the present research. The Odisha Forum for Social Action's director Fr. Ajaya Kumar Singh was the main editor of this book. He stated that the book contains information from people who either witnessed or victimised by the events. So, this book is considered one of the primary sources for this research. The researcher took his help in collecting more material in relation to the Kandhamal violence.

7.2.4 Anto Akkara's writings⁵⁷⁵

The fourth source is Akkara's writings. Akkara is an Indian journalist who worked extensively on human rights and religion- and society-related issues of South Asia. He had been working with Ecumenical News International/The Tablet (London) as a foreign correspondent for 25 years. During the period of this research, he worked with South Asia correspondent of Catholic News Service (Washington) and World Watch Monitor. He visited Kandhamal 28 times and investigated various violent incidents of different nature and published them as books. His main concern was to expose the reality of the Kandhamal violence to the world and get justice for the victims. His books contain stories of victims collected by directly listening to them and substantiated by references to original documented records and reports. The researcher had a chance to meet him twice and clarified the areas that needed more explanation. The researcher

⁵⁷⁰ "Pakistani lawyer and human rights activist visited Odisha as the United Nations' Special Rapporteur on Religious Freedom." Ibid., 373.

⁵⁷¹ "She is a well-known human rights activist and journalist. She is joint editor with Javed Anand of Communalism Combat, Mumbai." Ibid., 255.

⁵⁷² "She is an associate professor of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco. Her work spans issues of cultural survival, nation/nationalism, gendered violence and postcolonial critique." Angana P. Chatterji, *Violent Gods: Hindu Nationalism in India's Present Narratives from Orissa* (Gurgaon: Three Essays, 2009).

⁵⁷³ "He is an activist, editor, author and documentary film maker. His recent book is *A Matter of Equity – Freedom of Faith in Secular India*, 2007." Johndayal.com

⁵⁷⁴ "He was a professor at Indian Institute of Technology, Mumbai. He has authored several books on secularism and human rights." Ram Puniyani, *Hindu Extreme Right-wing Groups: Ideology and Consequence* (New Delhi: Anamika Pub. & Distributors, 2004).

⁵⁷⁵ Anto Akkara, *Kandhamal a Blot on Indian Secularism* (Delhi: Media House, 2009), Anto Akkara, *Shining Faith in Kandhamal* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2011), Anto Akkara, *Kandhamal Craves for Justice* (Bangalore: Veritas India Books, 2013), Anto Akkara, *Early Christians of 21st Century* (Bangalore: Veritas India Books, 2013), Anto Akkara, *Who Killed Swami Laxmanananda?* (Thrissur: Veritas India Books, 2016).

also had the opportunity to meet some of the victims whom Akkara had interviewed, and the similarity in their narratives confirmed the authenticity of his writings. He published five books based on the Kandhamal violence.

7.2.5 Breaking the shackled silence: unheard voices of women from Kandhamal⁵⁷⁶

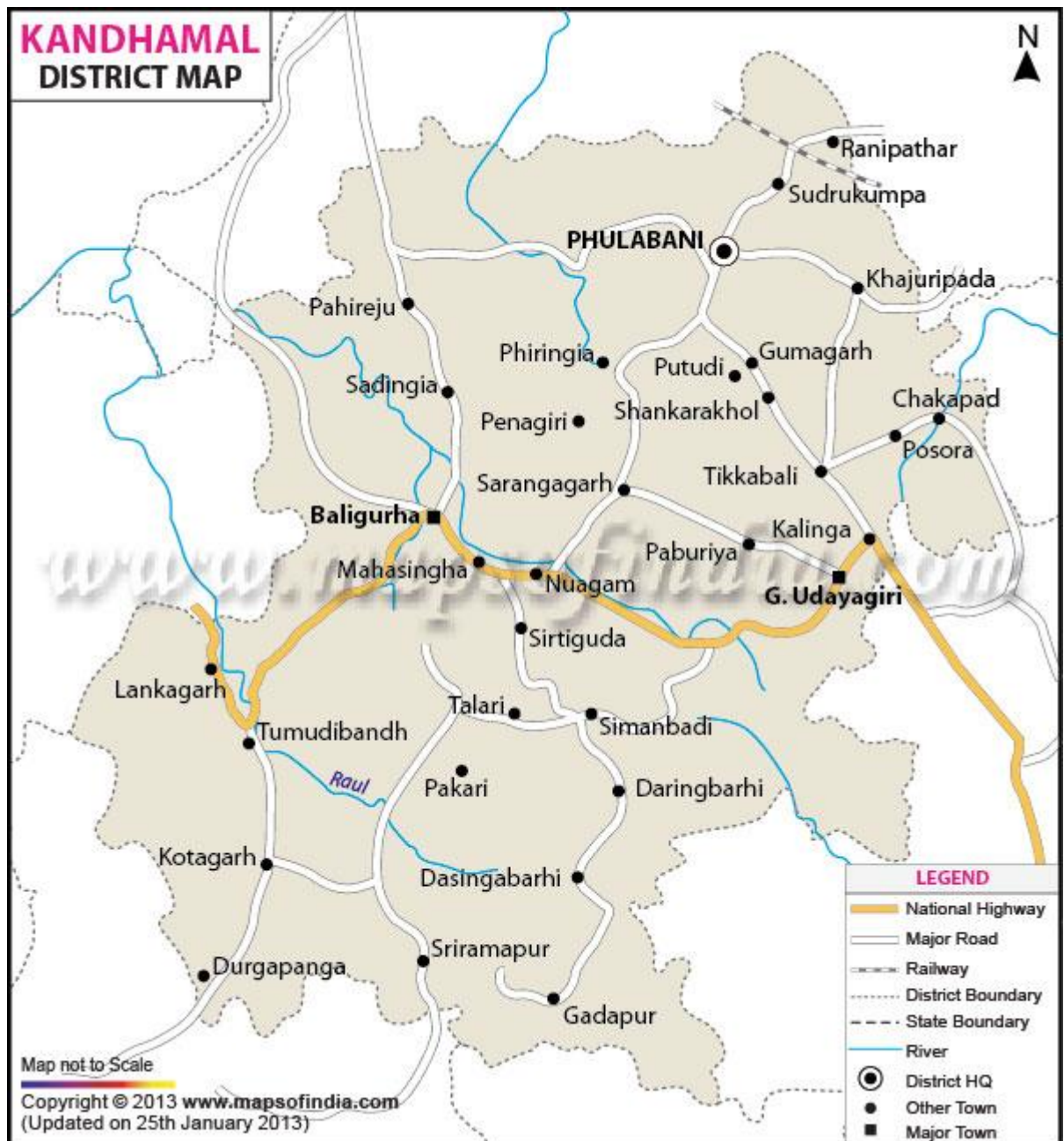
The August 2014 report published by Odisha's National Alliance of Women is the fifth source. Ms. Saumya Uma and her team had done research from the feminist perspective. It looked at violence or conflict from a feminist point of view and documented it in women's perspective. This document carries case studies as narrated by women. This study is an action research that is qualitative in nature.

7.2.6 The researcher's field study

The sixth source is the data collected by the researcher. There were hundreds of violent incidents took place in a short span of time in Kandhamal during the time of Swami Lakshmanananda's death and burial. It is difficult to record all the incidents. In order to validate the existing reports and to get more details in relation to this research, the researcher visited Kandhamal in July and October 2016, met 40 victims from 10 villages. All the 40 people were direct witnesses and victims of the 2007 and 2008 violent attacks. There were 28 men and 12 women who were interviewed. A qualitative method was used for data collection, by listening to their experiences and analysing the severity of the violence. The incidents are recorded chronologically under dates.

⁵⁷⁶ Saumya Uma, *Breaking the Shackled Silence: Unheard Voices of Women from Kandhamal* (Bhubaneswar: NAWO Odisha Chapter, 2014).

7.2.6.1 Kandhamal District map



7.3 Background of the violence in 2007

Though there had been a series of violent episodes against the Christians in Kandhamal earlier, the incidents that occurred during the years 2007 and 2008 were particularly pre-meditated and well planned and therefore the worst of all. Prior to the Kandhamal violence of December 2007, on 12 September 2007, the VHP, aided by the BJP and the *Rameswaram Sreeramsetu Surakshaya Manch*, had barricaded road and rail traffic across Odisha, objecting to the alleged demolition of the mythic '*Ram Sethu*.'⁵⁷⁷ By the end of September 2007, the RSS national leader Praveen Togadia visited Odisha, travelled across the state, stirring cadres' emotions for *Hindutva*'s spiritual and political victory. On 24 September 2007, the VHP organised the All India Hindu Religious Conference at Puri, Odisha, to strategically deal with the issues such as cow slaughtering, religious conversion, *Ram Sethu* and the movement of Christian missionaries in Odisha.⁵⁷⁸

Various reasons had been identified to explain this communal violence in Kandhamal. The tension between the Konds and Panas was fuelled by the Sangh Parivar to a great extent. The Konds, the inhabitant of Kandhamal who followed their tribal religion, were later incorporated into the Hindu religious tradition with the help of Lakshmanananda. There were few Christians among the Konds in Kandhamal. The Panas fall under the category of low caste who were considered as migrants, the majority of them being Christians. The seats of both the Member of Parliament (MP) and the Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) were reserved for (Panas) Scheduled Caste (SC) candidates in the Kandhamal constituency. The Kond (Scheduled Tribe, ST), who was the majority community in Kandhamal constituency, objected to such reservation. The rift between the political leaders of these two communities aggravated the conflict between the Konds and Panas.⁵⁷⁹

The Panas of the Baliguda subdivision were recognised as a hill tribe until the independence, but after the independence, they lost their tribal status. Before the

⁵⁷⁷ "The Sethusamudram Shipping Canal Project in Tamil Nadu is proposed to link India and Sri Lanka across the sea referred to as Sethusamudram, through the chain of islands known as *Ram Sethu*. *Sethu* means bridge in Sanskrit. The VHP claimed that this project will demolish the undersea bridge, mythologized to have been constructed by Lord Ram. Ram is an Arian God, worshipped by the North Indians." Op. cit., Angana P. Chatterji, *Violent Gods...*, 308.

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid., 309.

⁵⁷⁹ Report of the committee constituted by the DGP Orisson Ethno-Religious conflict in Kandhamal District. 4.

independence, Baliguda subdivision was part of Ganjam District of the Madras Presidency. There was a special protection for the hill tribes against the non-tribal people in the areas of Madras Presidency. The Dalit communities dwelling in the areas were recognised as hill tribes in the Telugu-speaking area of Madras. So, the Panas of Baliguda subdivision was also considered as a hill tribe. In 1950, the President of India issued a Constitutional Order saying that Dalit communities that convert to other religions from Hinduism would no longer be included in SC category.⁵⁸⁰

Some of the Panas started a non-governmental organisation (NGO) called Phulbani Kui Jana Kalyana Sangha. The aim of the Sangha was to get the ST status for the *Kui*-speaking Panas. A petition was filed by Jana Kalyana Sangha in the High Court of Odisha demanding the ST status for the *Kui*-speaking Panas on the basis that the Presidential Order as amended in 2002 showed that any ‘*Kui*-speaking’ communities falls under the category of ST. On 12 July 2007, the High Court, while disposing of the writ petition, directed the state administration to investigate the issue and amend necessary changes in the Record of Rights as per the 2002 Presidential Order. Based on the Court’s Order, the NGO started to disseminate the idea that those who were recorded as SCs (Panas) in the revenue records of Kandhamal District would be treated as ST (*Kui*) in future.⁵⁸¹

Reacting to the claim and the campaign of the Phulbani Kui Jana Kalyana Sangha, the members of the Vanvasi Kond organisations organised protest processions and rallies. They demanded the removal of ‘*Kui*’ from the Presidential Notification of 2002 and the cancellation of the registration of the NGO. On 7 October 2007, Secretaries of Revenue and ST & SC Development Departments visited Kandhamal to clarify the constitutional status of various communities. However, the situation created by the NGO could not be resolved to the satisfaction of the tribal communities and the tension remained.⁵⁸²

The *Kui* Samaj co-ordination committee of Kandhamal called for a two-day *bundh* (strike) in the district from 24 to 25 December with a six-point demand.⁵⁸³

⁵⁸⁰ Hemant Nayak, file:///G:/New%20folder/Dossier_on_Kandhamal.pdf. Accessed on 11/02/2017.

⁵⁸¹ Op. cit., Report of the committee constituted by the DGP..., 5.

⁵⁸² Op. cit., Paul Divakar, Sirivella Prasad and Annie Namala, “Do we have freedom of faith with dignity?” JPDC, 131.

⁵⁸³ “The main demands of *Kui*-Samaja were annulment of Presidential assent to tribal status for SC converted Christians, de-registration of *Kui* Jana – Samaja Kalyana Sammiti (Bhubaneswar), cancellation of fake caste certificates issued by Minister Mr. Padmanav Behera, CBI inquiry against Mr.

Immediately after the announcement of the *bundh*, the agitators blocked the roads by cutting trees and placing huge boulders on the road. Kandhamal District was totally cut off from all sides.⁵⁸⁴

There was another development during the same period at Bamunigaon, a small town with a police station and other government offices. On 19 December 2007, the Ambedkar Banika Sangh and the church youth obtained permission for a Christmas celebration. The police inspector inspected the site and sanctioned the permission with a promise of providing protection from 23 December. On the 23rd, when the youths started to erect an *arch* (a bamboo structure), the Hindu youths warned them not to put up any Christmas decoration. The Christians showed the government permission and continued their work. The *bundh* (strike) was supposed to be effective from the evening of 24 December, but around 9 am, the local RSS leaders came in a group to the local market and ordered to close the shops. However, the police intervened and kept the market open. But a mob attacked the customers and destroyed the Christmas decorations and the *arch*. The mob was equipped with all the local weapons and guns. Two young Christian boys, Sillu (aged 12) and Avinash Nayak (aged 15), were wounded by gunshots. All the Christians ran to the forest and hid.⁵⁸⁵

On the same day, around 11 am, Lakshmanananda Saraswati was travelling to Bamunigaon in his vehicle. On the way, at Daringbadi, a private bus broke down and stopped on the narrow road for repair. Since the road was narrow, Lakshmanananda's vehicle could not go further. Lakshmanananda heard the Christmas music from the village church. He sent his bodyguards to the church in order to stop the music. They went to the church and started to argue with the members of the church. They tore the decorations and pulled down the speaker boxes. Later, Lakshmanananda Saraswati went to Daringbadi and got himself admitted in the Community Health Centre, claiming that he was attacked by Christians. The ETV's Odiya news channel flashed that Lakshmanananda Saraswati was attacked and injured by a Christian mob.⁵⁸⁶

Radhakanta Nayak, MP eviction of encroachment from over the lands of Adivasis." "Kandhamal Report" (Bhubaneswar: Justice on Trial, 07/02/2008), 14.

⁵⁸⁴ Op. cit., S. Anand, "Next Stop Orissa," JPDC, 46.

⁵⁸⁵ Op. cit., Angana P. Chatterji, *Violent Gods...*, 291. Cf. Op. cit., S. Anand, "Next Stop Orissa," JPDC, 46. Op. cit Report of the committee constituted by the DGP..., 8–10.

⁵⁸⁶ John Dayal, *Non-Government White Paper on the Violence in the Kandhamala District* (Bhubaneswar: 2008), 14.

Soon enough, the *Hindutva* group called for a 36-hour *bundh* (strike), which was followed by violent events across Kandhamal lasting for 30 days. Approximately 100 institutions, 90 churches, and 630 Christian houses were destroyed, vandalised and set on fire by the Sangh Parivar group. A large number of Christians became refugees in the nearby forest, women were molested, and 11 people were killed. But the local administration and the police remained inactive. They refused to protect the Christians because the BJP, the political wing of Sangh Parivar, was part of the ruling government in Odisha.⁵⁸⁷

7.4 Violent events in 2007

It was reported by the villagers that on 24 December 2007, a group of Hindu youngsters attacked the Roman Catholic Church at Barakhama village in Balliguda block. One of the young men fell from the roof of the church while trying to pull down the cross and died on the way to the hospital. But the Hindus spread the news that the young man was killed by the Christians.⁵⁸⁸ Further Elio Nayak stated that,

On 25 December, people from neighbouring villages entered Barakhama with Hindu slogans and weapons. They started to attack the churches and Christian houses. The Christians fled to the jungle for their lives. Properties of the Christians were looted; their houses were destroyed and gutted with fire. On 26 December, Govinda Chandra Nayak, aged 60, was mercilessly killed with an axe. Kajara Digal, aged 65, was severely beaten, and he died after some days. All the Christians stayed in the forest for four days starving for food and warm clothes. A woman gave birth to a baby boy in the jungle. On 28 December, the Central Reserved Police Force (CRPF) came and brought the Christians to the temporary relief camp. The Christians returned to their desolate houses after two months. However, they were prohibited to take wood from the forest and were not allowed to buy bricks, cement and other construction materials they required to rebuild their houses. Any material sold to them was at an exorbitant price. Even the masons from other communities refused to work for Christians.⁵⁸⁹

⁵⁸⁷ Op. cit., Angana Chatterji, "Kandhamal: Hindutva's Terror," JPDC, 27.

⁵⁸⁸ *Kandhamal: Root Cause, A Report* (Ahmadabad: Justice on Trial, 2008), 15.

⁵⁸⁹ Interview with Thoma Nayak, Elio Nayak and Tunakumar Nayak on 29/10/2016. Appendix 4.

Sis. Christa, the Convent Superior from Balliguda shared her experience as follows:

On the evening of 24 December 2007, we, some youth and one Sister, were decorating the church; suddenly, the boys told us that we are going because RSS people were planning to attack the church. I, the Sister and another boy were left in the church. Around 7 p.m., a group of people came and destroyed the outside decorations and left. We immediately locked the gates and church door. Three of us were hiding in the vestry. We thought they won't come inside the church, but they broke open the church door and entered in shouting and damaging things, desecrated the holy altar and set fire. We ran out through the back door to the seminary and climbed up the terrace; we saw a huge fire in the convent campus; the mob entered the seminary and began to destroy and burn everything. We three entered a small vestry of the chapel; they set fire everywhere, and there was too much smoke inside the chapel, so they couldn't see the door or window of the vestry. We were suffocated; I thought we would die in that room, and we lost our hope and energy. I had my mobile and switched on the light, and then we saw the window above near the roof; the boy opened it, and all three of us put our faces outside and breathed. Later, we found that except that window all other windows were broken and threw into fire. Around 12 o'clock at night, some students were calling us 'sister, sister'. I could recognised their voice; they were seminarians so we shouted back saying 'we are alive, come and put off the fire'. They brought buckets of water and put off the fire and reached us. We collapsed; they carried us with much joy to the convent side. I was very much worried about the Sisters and girls in the convent: six of them hid under the staircase. After burning everything, they left the convent; in the meantime, two Sisters and the four girls jumped over the wall and escaped. There was a local girl who took them to her house. Later, I also joined them. I was here from 1986; there was no problem. Once in 1988, one of our school boys asked for a computer course completion certificate without completing the course. I refused to give him, so he told me, 'I am an RSS man, you Christians will be chased away'. The RSS advised the parents not to send their children to Christian schools, but they replied,

‘Education and medical has no religion, we prefer to go to the best.’⁵⁹⁰

Thoma Nayak from Barakhama village narrated his bitter experience as follows:

I was taken to a Hindu temple and beaten up by a crowd; they treated me like an animal, performed some rituals on me and forced me to worship their God, but I refused to do so; so, they finally warned me and chased me away. The crowd was mixed caste and tribal group. The high-caste youngsters were so aggressive. I suffered mainly due to my Christian identity. Neither caste nor tribal identify played any role in the violence.⁵⁹¹

It was clear from the statement of Thomas Nayak that his Christian identity became the reason for the torture. There was a social identity problem between the two communities based on politico-economic benefits. The Sangh Parivar took advantage of this situation and provoked violence against Christians in Kandhamal. The attacks on churches and Christian institutions were clear shreds evidence of the twisted socio-economic and religious communal factors, in order to get a political gain and to establish Hindu nationalism.

7.5 Background of the violence in 2008

On 23 August 2008, Lakshmanananda Saraswati was murdered together with his followers, Baba Amritananda, Mata Bhaktimayee, Kishore Baba and Puranjan Ganthi in his ashram at Jalespeta in Kandhamal District. They were shot by a group of unidentified armed men. Without any evidence, the Sangh Parivar held the Christian community responsible for the murders. *Hindutva* activists started to agitate and called for a 12-hour *bandh* on 24 August. The local media supported the view of the Sangh Parivar and ‘confirmed it’ with the past records as evidence. The BJP, as part of the coalition government in Odisha, supported the strike. The Odisha government declared closure of the educational institutions across the state. On the afternoon of 24 August, a procession with Lakshmanananda Saraswati’s corpse travelled from Jalespeta to Chakapad Ashram for cremation. It halted for a night at Phulbani, the headquarters of the district. The procession reached Chakapad next day on the 25th.⁵⁹²

⁵⁹⁰ Interview with Sis. Christa on 03/11/2016. Appendix 4.

⁵⁹¹ Interview with Thomas Nayak on 29/10/2016. Appendix 4.

⁵⁹² Op. cit., Angana P. Chatterji, *Violent Gods...*, 311. Cf. Parfulla Das, “Communal Card” *Frontline*, Vol.25, No. 19, Sep. 13–26, 2008. <http://www.frontline.in/navigation/?type=static&page=archive>. Accessed on 14/14/2017.

Though there was a shorter route, the procession took a longer route which covered 250 km and it caused riots throughout Kandhamal. The violence was led by the RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal and other Sangh Parivar–affiliated organisations with the support of local political leaders and administration.

7.5.1 The route of the funeral procession of Swami Lakshmanananda on 24 and 25 August 2008



Praveen Togadia, the VHP leader, known for spitting venom against religious minorities, came to Kandhamal to make inflammatory speeches during the funeral procession. He reached Kandhamal from Bhubaneswar airport escorted by police while ordinary citizens were stranded because of the *bandh* (strike). The state government refused the entry of other opposition party leaders to Kandhamal.⁵⁹³ The mob destructed churches and institutions, looted and vandalised Christian houses, tortured, raped and killed Christians. This violence took place for more than four months in Kandhamal. According to Ajaya Kumar Singh, 415 villages were ransacked, at least 8406 houses were looted and burnt, about 100 people were killed, about 56,000 Christians became homeless, and about 30,000 people were displaced and forced to live in relief camps.⁵⁹⁴ About 395 churches were damaged, and 13 schools, colleges, philanthropic institutions including a leprosy home, tuberculosis sanatoriums, and offices of several non-profit organisations, altogether about 200 Christian institutions were looted, damaged or destroyed in Odisha. During this time, about 2000 Christians were forced to give up their faith. Education of over 10,000 children was severely disrupted due to their displacement and fear. This was the biggest and longest religious communal violence that ever took place in Indian history under democracy.⁵⁹⁵ Different groups and commissions have recorded the events and estimated the loss of life and wealth. Though the riots took place eight years ago, it is still fresh in the minds of the people to recall the events. The researcher stayed at the Roman Catholic Pastoral Centre in Kanjamendi, K. Nuagam Block, Kandhamal District for 10 days and collected information by visiting places and interviewing the people who were actually present, involved and victimised by the 2007 and 2008 riots.

7.6 Violent events between 2008 and 2010

7.6.1 Saturday 23 August

On 23 August 2008, around 7 pm, armed militants entered the Jalespata Ashram and killed five people including Swami Lakshmanananda. Police reached the ashram by 8

⁵⁹³ Anto Akkara, *Kandhamal a Blot on Indian Secularism* (Delhi: Media House, 2009), 21.

⁵⁹⁴ Ajai Kumar Singh, *Kandhamal Images* (Bhubaneswar: Odisha Forum for Social Action, 2011), 3.

⁵⁹⁵ Joanna Mallec, "Anti-Christian violence in the Indian State of Orissa in 2008 in the reports of non-governmental organizations," *Orientalia Christiana Cracoviensia*, 3, 2011. 99–103.

pm and found a hand-written letter, written by the Maoists⁵⁹⁶ stating the reason for killing them. The news spread all over, on 24 August, section 144 of IPC⁵⁹⁷ (Indian Penal Code) was declared all over Kandhamal District, and there was high alert in the State of Odisha. The Chief Minister of the state appealed to the public to maintain and keep the peace. But roads were blocked, trains were stopped and shops were closed all over Odisha. The Sangh Parivar called for a state-wide *bandh* and spread the news that it was the Christians who killed Swami Lakshmanananda. The local television channel broadcasted that it was the Christians who killed him by showing earlier conflicts between Christians and Lakshmanananda.⁵⁹⁸

The situation was further explained by Carmelite Sister Christa from her experience who was the Convent Superior of Balliguda Convent.

On 23 August 2008 late in the evening, I and another two girls were travelling back to Balliguda Convent by taxi. The taxi driver was a Hindu. I received a call informing that Swami Lakshmanananda had been killed, and I was advised not to go to Balliguda but to go to Chatrapur Convent instead which was 200 km away. Since the driver was a Hindu, I was hesitant to tell him. In the meantime, someone called the driver over the phone and conveyed the message of Swami's death. The Hindu driver, however, assured me that he would take her wherever she deemed was safe. With the help of the driver after much difficulty, we got fuel for our vehicle and reached Chatrapur after six hours of horror travel. On the same day, Sisters at Balliguda fled to the jungle and remained there for two days after which the CRPF took them to camp. There was less damage to the convent this time.⁵⁹⁹

In Kandhamal, attacks on Christians began in the morning of 24 August 2008 and continued intensively till the end of September. This study does not attempt to

⁵⁹⁶ The Communist Party of India (Maoists). The ideologues within the party believe in armed struggle to achieve political power. Rishi Chhikara, *People's Liberation Guerrilla Army of CPI (Maoists)* (New Delhi: KW Publishers, 2012), 1.

⁵⁹⁷ Joining unlawful assembly armed with deadly weapon. Whoever being armed with any deadly weapon, or with anything which, used as a weapon of offence, is likely to cause death, is a member of an unlawful assembly, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both.

⁵⁹⁸ Parfulla Das, "Communal Card," *Frontline*, Vol.25, No. 19, Sep. 13–26, 2008. <http://www.frontline.in/navigation/?type=static&page=archive>. Accessed on 15/04/2017.

⁵⁹⁹ Interview with Sis. Christa 03/11/2016. Appendix 4

provide an exhaustive account of such a large-scale violence. However, some of the victims' narratives given to the researcher and data collected from other primary sources are presented to understand the nature of the violence witnessed in Kandhamal.

7.6.2 Sunday 24 August

A group of 30–40 people came by motorcycles to the church around 11 am when the worship was going on at Gunjibadi, Sarangagarh Block. They shouted slogans and charged the worshippers as killers of Swami Lakshmanananda. Billiam Digal, aged 32, a local pastor, and Bikram Digal, a 13-year-old boy, came out of the church. The furious men found that they came from Dungeri village which was near to Jalespata Ashram (where Lakshmanananda was killed), and they beat them and handed over to the police saying that they found a knife, Bible and a black scarf. They were taken to the police barracks in Phulbani and registered a case against them as killers of Lakshmanananda. The local Sangh Parivar leaders had a media conference and declared that the killers of Lakshmanananda were arrested. Soon, the news channels started flashing across Odisha and the country that the Christian killers of the Swami had been caught which made the situation worse for the Christians in Kandhamal.⁶⁰⁰

Jacob Pradhan from Bagadi, Phiringia Block went to buy medicine for his ailing father to Nuagam after the Sunday worship. He was identified as a Christian by a mob and was severely attacked. They handed over him to the police saying, “He is also one of the killers of Swami.” The police also beat him, filed a murder case against him and put him together with Billiam and Bikram at Phulbani.⁶⁰¹

According to different written sources, Rasanand Pradhan, 35-year-old paralysed man, was staying with his family at Gadragam village, Raikia Block along with 42 Christian families. Gadragam was the only village with Christians around Chakapad where Swami Lakshmanananda had started his *ashram* near the popular Hindu Shiva temple. On 24 August evening, a large number of Hindu activists from nearby villages surrounded the village with weapons. Christians ran to the jungle for their lives as soon as the armed mob started attacking their houses. Rasanand was left alone in the house. The mob ablaze the houses, and he was burnt to death. On 5 October 2008, his brothers

⁶⁰⁰ Anto Akkara, *Who Killed Swami Lakshmanananda?* (Thrissur: Veritas India Books, 2016) 102.

⁶⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 104.

returned to the village under police protection and collected his bones and buried.⁶⁰²

Pastor. Subash Kumar narrated the following:

I am from Dodingia village, Raikia Block. On 24 August 2008, at around 9 pm a group of high-caste men from outside came with petrol and weapons to Dodingia village. About 300 local Hindu Panas and Konds joined them, and shouted 'Jai Ram' slogans and attacked Christian houses, looted and burnt them down. All the Christians ran to the jungle, and remained there for 3 days, surviving only with water and leaves. Two of the women delivered their babies in the jungle. Again, on 26 and 27 August, the mob returned to the village and demolished the churches and made a declaration that they would first kill the priest and leaders of the church. They announced a reward of Rs. 500,000 to anyone who killed a priest.⁶⁰³

Further he said, on the fourth day, all the Christians went to Raikia camp with police protection and stayed in the camp for one year. There was no sanitation, no proper food, no proper shelter and no medical facilities in the camp. Two of the elders died, and two ladies delivered babies in the camp in that situation. After a year, when they returned to the village, their houses were burned down and their agricultural land had been confiscated by others. Several peace talks were initiated by officials, but there was no positive progress. The Hindus put a lot of restrictions on the Christians as well as to their own people. So, Christians requested the sub-collector to give land for their settlement outside the village. Considering the situation, the sub-collector agreed and allotted a land to build 27 houses. Everyone got a compensation of Rs. 50,000 from the government. With that money and the help of Barnabas Funds, an NGO from Delhi, they built their houses in the new place and called it Ambethkar Nagar. The government registered the land in their names and gave electricity connections. Christian NGOs helped them to have two bore wells and one tube well. However, a few Christian families rebuilt their houses in their own places and remain in the village. Churches in the village were rebuilt with the help of Christians from the outside. In the new village, they were in a house church. Peace between the communities has been restored but not

⁶⁰² Op. cit., Anto Akkara, *Kandhamal Craves for Justice*, 49. Cf. Op. cit., Anto Akkara, *Early Christians...*, 30. Dibakar Parichha and Santosh Kumar Digal, *Kandhamal Massacre of the Innocents* (New Delhi: Integrity Media, 2015), 139.

⁶⁰³ Interview with Subash Kumar Digal on 01/11/2016. Appendix 4

the trust.⁶⁰⁴

Further, it is recorded that Kantheswar Digal, aged 53, a Catholic from Sankarakhole village, Chakapad Block was asked to carry his Bible and attend a village meeting with other Christians on 16th of August. However, sensing a conspiracy, he avoided the meeting. In that meeting, the Christians were asked to embrace Hinduism or quit Kandhamal. Kantheswar decided to leave the village and lived with his son Rajendra who was in Bhubaneswar. So, he sold his goats and took a bus to Bhubaneswar with his wife and all his valuables. After two days, he returned to Sankarakhole to sell the remaining two dozen goats. Meanwhile, the shocking news of the murder of Swami Lakshmanananda was broadcasted on the night of 23 August. Realising the dangerous situation, he boarded the early morning bus on 24 August to Bhubaneswar. When the local Hindu activists came to know that he had left the village by bus, they rang up their colleagues to block the road ahead of the bus. The bus was stopped near the school at Adabali in Belaghar Block. A group of fundamentalists barged into the bus and dragged Kantheswar out. He was beaten up mercilessly, his hands tied at the back and took him to a temple in nearby Dakapanga village in Raikia Block. They kept him there for a day. A Christian couple from Dutukagam village under Tikabali Block, Meghanath Digal and his wife Priyatama were also brought to the temple. The Sangh Parivar organised a big celebration in the evening and sacrificed several goats. They drank and danced around these three Christians, who were kept in the middle. Later, Priyatama was gang-raped publicly in front of the two Christians. They then tied ropes around the necks of all the three and pulled it in different directions. When they collapsed unconscious their private parts were mutilated and the dead bodies were dumped in a river. The bodies were found after nine days.⁶⁰⁵

Akkara recorded that Madan Nayak was a pastor who conducted worship on 24 August 2008, at Sritiguda village in Nuagaon Block. Pastor Madan was returning to his village Dokediat G. Udayagiri Block along with two other pastors Sashikanta Nayak and Fidem Nayak. They were stopped at Gurpakia by the Hindu activists. The pastors were asked to burn the Bibles as a sign of renouncing their faith, but they refused and reiterated that they would never forsake their faith. The furious activists killed them;

⁶⁰⁴ Interview with Subash Kumar Digal and Sunil Nayak on 01/11/2016. Appendix 4

⁶⁰⁵ Dibakar Parichha and Santosh Kumar Digal, *Kandhamal Massacre of the Innocents* (New Delhi: Integrity Media, 2015), 83. Cf. Op. cit., Anto Akkara, *Kandhamal Craves...*, 46. Cf. Op. cit., Anto Akkara, *Early Christians...*, 27.

they chopped their bodies into pieces and set them on fire. The police found only burnt body pieces. Madan's wife Savitri Nayak came to know about her husband's death only after three days. Savitri stayed in the refugee camp at G. Udayagiri.⁶⁰⁶

Fr. C. Pradhan narrated the ordeal happening of the day as follows:

The burning of churches and Christian centres began on the afternoon of the first day of the funeral procession on 24 August, which happened to be a Sunday. When the procession passed the gates of the Jana Vikas, a social service centre of the Roman Catholic Church, and Divya Jyoti Pastoral Centre at Kanjamendi on the K. Nuagam road, at noon, a mob of 500 people mostly from outside broke into the Jana Vikas' building and burnt 25 motorcycles, two four-wheelers and all the articles and furniture. Thereafter, they proceeded to the Pastoral Centre with inflammable materials like petrol and crude bombs and torched everything in the building and the vehicles. Father Thomas Chellan, Father Cassian Pradhan and Sister Meena Lalita Barwa, a Catholic nun of the Servite order, were in the centre at that time. They escaped by climbing over the compound wall at the back of the centre. The mob also burnt a cow in the centre alive. As it was raining that evening, the clergy who had escaped from the centre could not stay in the jungle, so took shelter in the house of a local Hindu.⁶⁰⁷

7.6.3 Monday 25 August

Fr. C. Pradhan narrated that on the next morning, 25 August, the local Hindu activists started attacking and looting the houses of Christians and churches. Around 9 am, the mob caught hold of Fr. Chellan and Sister Barwa from the house of a Hindu who gave them shelter at night. They tortured them and dragged them to the Jana Vikas' building and threatened Fr. Chellan to rape the sister. They beat him up and stripped him naked when he refused to do so. Sister was beaten and gang-raped. Then, they brought them half naked to the marketplace in the presence of policemen. The Sister cried for help from the police, but they did not respond. The gang tied them on a pillar in front of the temple to be burnt alive. Meanwhile, a group of police came from Balliguda and

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid., 74.

⁶⁰⁷ Op. cit., Anto Akkara, *Kandhamal Craves...*, 31.

rescued them and brought them to the police station at Balliguda.⁶⁰⁸ This whole incident was narrated by Fr. Chellan, and it is recorded by Akkara in his book. Sister Barwa also read out the statement at the news conference on 25 October 2008 in New Delhi, which is also printed by Akkara in his book *Kandhamal Craves for Justice*.⁶⁰⁹

Kumuda Kumar Nayak, the staff of the Jana Vikas explained that,

The mob brought petrol and other weapons from another village. On 25th morning, they attacked Christian houses, looted, damaged and burnt them. I had two shops; they demolished those and fired it. On 24th and 25th, there was fire and smoke everywhere in Kanjamendi, and people were running for their life. On 25th morning, around 9 o'clock Fr. Chellan and Sister Meena were caught, beaten up, and made half-naked, and the Sister was gang-raped at Jana Vikas in public. We were in the jungle for four days, and our local Hindu friends supplied food in the jungle. After that, with the help of the CRPF, we moved to the camp; from there, my family went to my relative's house and stayed there till December 2008. When we came back, nothing was left at home, so we rebuilt our house and settled again. Many of the goons were arrested and put into jail. Other Hindu friends showed their regret for the happenings. Now, we are fine with everyone. Jana Vikas renovation started after 2 years, and the office resumed in 2011.⁶¹⁰

Krisanth Mullick, came from Betticola village narrated that,

On 25 August 2008, a group of outside and the local Hindus came with weapons shouting slogans and attacked the churches. We were all terrified by that incident and ran to the forest, and stayed there for three days. In the meantime, they looted our houses, demolished and burnt everything. On the 28th, the police came and rescued us from forest and kept us in the high school campus at Udaygiri. The attackers tried to poison the water in the camp twice. Many left the camp for different places. We went to the camp in Cuttack and

⁶⁰⁸ Interview with Fr. Cassian Pradhan on 03/11/2016. Interview with Kumuda Kumar Nayak a social worker of Jana Vikas on 04/11/2016. Appendix 4. Cf. Op. cit., Anto Akkara, *Early Christians...*, 60. Fr. Thomas Chellan, "A Hindu mob began our crucifixion," *Catholic Information and News Service*. <http://www.vaticans.org/index.php?/archives/1240-A-Hindu-mob-began-our-crucifixion-parade>. Accessed on 12/05/2017.

⁶⁰⁹ Op. cit., Anto Akkara, *Kandhamal Craves...*, 75.

⁶¹⁰ Interview with Kumuda Kumar Nayak a social worker of Jana Vikas on 04/11/2016. Appendix 4.

stayed there for one year; from there, we moved to Jala camp, from the Jala camp to Udaygiri again, and then to Tikavalli camp. There was a peace committee formed by the subcollector, BDO and tahsildar; in that meeting, the Hindus strongly told us that if we wanted to stay in our village we had to be a Hindu. The officials tried to convince them through various meetings, but they failed. Finally, the subcollector offered a land for us to settle. There was a big agitation from the Hindus for allotting the land for us. Our agricultural land had been taken by the Hindus. We ran away with the clothes we were wearing, and we lost everything. We got a compensation of Rs.50,000 from the government. The Believers' Church came forward to build houses for us. We gave them our compensation amount of Rs.50,000/, and they built us these small houses. There are 67 houses in this new village, and 50 families from Betticola. We earn through making leaf plates. This new colony is called Nandagiri. RC and Believers' Churches are here for worship.⁶¹¹

Akkara recorded in his book *Early Christians of 21st Century* that Dasarath Pradhan, a 40-year-old Hindu social worker in Tiangia village, was outraged when the mob destroyed the local church and the Christian properties on 25 August 2008 at Budedipada in G. Udayagiri. He stood in the path of the mob and asked them to stop the 'nonsense'. The furious mob ridiculed him as an agent of Christians and assaulted him. Dasarath tried to escape, but he was caught and hacked by the mob. He died on the spot.⁶¹²

Further, Akkara recorded that Ajit Kumar Digal, a 30-year-old private school peon, was living in Sritiguda village in Nuagaon Block with his wife and two children. On 25 August 2008 night, Ajit was staying in his house and heard shouts of Hindu slogans. A mob of 50 people reached his house and ordered him to come out of the house. When he came out, they caught hold of him and slapped him. They dragged him on the road and tore his shirt. They told him, "If you do not renounce your Christian faith now, we will kill you". Meanwhile, he was beaten up and kept naked. The mob forced him to walk naked ahead of them. An elderly prominent Hindu of the village came across the parade. He shouted at the mob for beating up the young man and parading him naked.

⁶¹¹ Interview with Krisanth Mullick on 01/11/2016. Appendix 4

⁶¹² Op. cit., Anto Akkara, *Early Christians...*, 176.

His strong words stopped the mob from torturing Ajit. However, the mob looted the Christian houses and torched them. Ajit took refuge in his relative's house.⁶¹³

It is recorded that Sadheswar Pradhan, a 64-year-old Hindu, lived in Sulesaru village near Tikabali. On 25 August 2008, a mob with weapons entered the village to target the Christians at night. Sadheswar stood in the middle of the road with outstretched hands, trying to stop the mob by saying, "Christians of this village are good. We have been living here peacefully together. You should not attack them". The leaders of the mob accused him as an 'agent of the Christians'. One of them chopped his right hand with a sword. Sadheswar tried to escape, but the furious mob beat him with iron rods and hacked his body into pieces. The mob went ahead looting and torching Christian houses in that village. Next morning, they burned the body of Sadheswar and wiped out all pieces of evidence of the murder.⁶¹⁴

The same sources recorded the event of Father Bernard Digal. Aged 46, the parish priest of Tiangia in G. Udayagiri was struck on the way to Tiangia from Bhubaneswar at Sankarakhole. The funeral procession of Swami Lakshmanananda came near the church at Sankarakhole on the afternoon of 25 August and set fire on church and the convent. The two priests and nuns along with other staff of the convent fled to the jungle. The mob killed their two dogs at the centre and burnt Fr. Bernard's van. They came back to the parish the next day looking for some food. Fr. Bernard decided to walk over 15 kilometres to Padhampada along with his driver. On the way, they saw houses burning in different villages, and they kept moving on. After the sunset, they could not proceed further. They stayed inside the burnt Reformed Church at Dudurkagaon. At night a mob chased Fr. Bernard and attacked him with deadly weapons, both his legs were broken; he was hit on the head with an iron rod and left in the jungle semiconscious to die. The nearby villagers heard his cry for help in the morning and carried him to the nearest road and called the police. The police took him to the government hospital in Phulbani. The church officials took him to Bhubaneswar with the help of the police. He was airlifted to Mumbai for treatment along with other two seriously injured priests. His condition slightly improved after one and half month of treatment. However, when he flew to Chennai to visit the senior priest, he became ill again. He slipped into a coma and died on 28 October 2008 at the St. Thomas Hospital

⁶¹³ Ibid., 90.

⁶¹⁴ Op. cit., Dibakar Parichha and Santosh Kumar Digal, 157. Cf. Ibid., 177.

in Chennai.⁶¹⁵

Mrs. Amona Nayak witnessed to the ordeal happenings of the day in Tiangia village and she narrated as follows:

My brother-in-law Vikram Nayak was a Christian businessman who lived in this village with his wife. On 25 August 2008, around 11 a.m., a mob came with weapons like axe, sword, iron rods and wooden staff. They attacked the Believers' Church and then entered the streets breaking houses and shouting slogans. Vikram Nayak, my brother-in-law was inside the house. Vikram was a civil contractor cum kerosene dealer. The mob attacked Vikram's house and broke open the door. Vikram was trying to escape by climbing up the roof, but he was pulled down by the mob. He was beaten up; he had a severe head injury, his left leg was broken, and right leg had an injury; he was bleeding from the gash on his head and leg. The mob used his kerosene to burn his house and motorbike. Vikram was lying in a corner. I gave him water and I witnessed the whole incident. The next day (26th) evening police came and took him to the hospital at Raikia which is 15 km away. The following day (27th) he died in the hospital. After the post-mortem, the body was buried in Raikia. Later, his wife got a sum of Rs. 5 lakh as compensation. The local MLA Manon Pradhan was allegedly involved directly in all these atrocities. No one was prosecuted in this case.⁶¹⁶

Jambothi Digal the widow of Trinath Digal from Tiangia shared her ordeal experience as follows:

On 25 August 2008, a mob came around 3 p.m. with weapons and shouting slogans. My husband Trinnatha Digal was countering the mob by shouting at them. They pushed him away and stoned him to death. His body was lying there till 28 August; police came and arranged for post-mortem at Raikia. After the post-mortem, the body was buried at Raikia. In the meantime, all the Christians ran to jungle. Our houses were looted and destroyed. On 29th, everyone went to Raikia camp, stayed there for a year and returned home. As a compensation for my husband's death, I received Rs 5 lakh and Rs 50,000

⁶¹⁵ Ibid., 45.

⁶¹⁶ Interview with Mrs. Amona Nayak on 31/10/2016. Appendix 4.

for the damage of our house. I rebuilt the house and is living alone; I have no children.⁶¹⁷

According to Ranjith Nayak, aged 47, who lived with his elderly father, wife and children at Tiangia, on 25 August 2008, Suresh Nayak came from the other side of the village with a bleeding head and told them that churches were damaged and a mob was attacking Christians. He urged people to run away from there. Ranjith and his family along with other Christians ran to the jungle, the mob came and broke the Roman Catholic churches, both old and new. The following day (26th) they came to the streets and attacked the houses, looted and burnt them. On 29th of August, all Christians went to Raikia camp from the jungle and stayed in the camp till May 2009 until they returned to their respective villages. They rebuilt the houses and resettled. They were given a compensation of rupees 20,000 and 50,000 for partially and fully damaged houses, respectively, from the government.⁶¹⁸

Anaclea Nayak, from Tiangia village shared his experience as follows:

On 25 August 2008 morning, I went for worship and heard about Swami's death. Everyone decided to pray and stay at our homes. But in the afternoon, I heard that three Christians were already killed in our village. So, the other Christians were running to the jungle. I also locked my house and ran to the jungle. We were in the jungle for four days, eating leaves and drinking water. Four days later, because of hunger, I came back home. My house was opened, looted, damaged and all the furniture burnt. I stayed at home that night. Hindus came to know that I came back; they came in the morning and took me to the temple. There were another 10–12 Christians brought by them; they told me that if I refused to accept Hinduism, they would kill me. I told them that if they did not kill people I would be with you. Then, they performed some rituals for us and gave us some advice from Ramayana, and then they declared us as Hindus. They asked us to give our willingness in writings; we did as we were told. The next day the CRPF came and set the local camp and asked all the Christians to go to the camp. I also went to the camp and stayed there for more than 6 months, and then I came back home. Now, I am a

⁶¹⁷ Interview with Jambothi Digal and Mariamai Nayak on 31/10/2016. Appendix 4. Cf. Op. cit., Dibakar Parichha and Santosh Kumar Digal, *Kandhamal Massacre...*, 167.

⁶¹⁸ Interview with Ranjith Nayak on 31/10/2016. Appendix 4

Christian. Now, we have no problem. We live with fear, but we won't run away from our home. We are ready to face the situation.⁶¹⁹

*A3 Bikram Nayak, a Hindu and the village head of Tiangia, was supportive of the Christians. The Christians of the village were not attacked in the year 2007 because of his leadership. However, he could not protect the Christians this time, and the village witnessed his death in 2008. He was killed because he was supporting the Christians.⁶²⁰

*A3 According to the villagers of Sisapanga in Raikia Block, Sibin Pradhan, aged 40, a Christian, lived in an interior village called Sisapanga with his wife Anita Pradhan and three children. On 25 August 2008, Sibin had gone to a Hindu's house for a funeral. After the funeral, Sibin and other Hindu friends drank alcohol together. Later Sibin was killed and cut into four pieces and left half burnt. His body was found after a week. The police took his body for a post-mortem, and he was buried at Raikia. His wife Anitha Pradhan was left with three children and received a compensation of Rs. 500,000 from the government.⁶²¹ On the same day 25 August, at 9 am there was a big mob of around 200 people which came from outside with axes, swords, petrol, and local guns, shouted slogans and attacked houses. Five houses were looted, damaged and burnt. All the Christians fled to the jungle. Thirteen families returned to their homes, and the others went to the Raikia camp.⁶²²

Pushpanjali, the widow of Dibysingh Digal, narrated her story as follows:

My husband was a Baptist pastor, he conducted a worship service at Trepanga village on 25 August 2008. He stayed at Trepanga that night because I cautioned him not to come back home to Raika. But around 9 pm, a group of Hindu activists dragged him out of the house and attacked him with an iron rod and other weapons. He was killed and thrown into the river. I went to Trepanga with my nine-year-old daughter Monalisa the next morning to collect my husband's body. Meanwhile, police took the body and sent it to Raika for post-mortem. After post-mortem, the body was brought back to Trepanga and buried. Since there was no safety for my daughter, I sent her to

⁶¹⁹ Interview with Anacleto Nayak on 31/10/2016. Appendix 4

⁶²⁰ Interview with Ranjith Nayak on 31/10/2016. Appendix 4 Cf. Op. cit., A Report by PUCL, 6.

⁶²¹ Interview with Elias Digal, Francis Digal and Zacharias on 01/11/2016. Appendix 4. Cf. Op. cit., Dibakar Parichha and Santosh Kumar Digal, 151.

⁶²² Interview with Elias Digal, Francis Digal and Zacharias on 01/11/2016. Appendix 4.

Punjab to study in a Catholic convent.⁶²³

7.6.4 Tuesday 26 August

Hiralal Pradhan, aged 20, a driving school student from Padangi, Sarangagarh Block was staying in the Catholic Church hostel at Phulbani. The church and hostel were attacked and vandalised on 25th, so he escaped and was trying to reach his home. When he reached his friend's house at Telapally village on 26th, a group of people barged into the house and raised the questions about him. He explained his situation, but they started assaulting him and dragged him out to the road. They informed the police that they had caught a Maoist. The police came and beat him and asked about the other Maoists. The mob threatened him to accept that he has link with the Maoist; otherwise, he would be burned alive. Out of fear, Hiralal confessed as they taught. He was taken to Phulbani police barracks. The media reported that one of the conspirators of the Swami's murderer was caught.⁶²⁴

Mrs. Kadampula Nayak, a widow of Pastor Samuel Nayak, narrated her ordeal story as follows:

On 26 August 2008, around 11 am a mob with weapons entered our Bakingia village and demolished the Catholic and Baptist churches. They began to attack the Christian houses. My husband Pastor Samuel Nayak, a well-known gospel preacher in Kandhamal. I, my husband Pastor Samuel Nayak and his mother Janamati Nayak were praying inside the house. My husband was holding the Bible to his chest. The mob broke open the door while we were kneeling and praying. They caught my husband and started beating him, and asked him if he would become a Hindu. When he refused, they broke his leg with an iron rod and asked him to tear the Bible. When he refused to do so, they cut his other leg with an axe. They gave him a final warning and asked him to urinate on the Bible. On his refusal to do so, they chopped off his head with an axe. He let out a loud cry and fell to the ground in a pool of blood. His mother was 70 years old, unable to see properly when she heard all the noise and her son's final screaming she shouted at the crowd. They pulled her down along with my husband and poured petrol on them and burnt her alive,

⁶²³ Interview with Ms. Pushpanjali on 1/11/2016 Appendix 4.

⁶²⁴ Anto Akkara, *Who Killed Swami Lakshmanananda?* (Thrissur: Veritas India Books, 2016) 106.

along with her son's body. I was beaten and pushed away. The remains of the bodies were lying in the house for two days. On the third day, the local Hindus took the body and burnt it. No post-mortem was done, but a case was filed. I was given a compensation of Rs. 500,000 by the government. After this incident, all Christians from this village ran to the jungle and resided there for 4 days, and subsequently went to the Raikia camp and moved on to the Mondakia camp. We returned to our village after a year and resettled with the help of a compensation from the government, and the churches were rebuilt.⁶²⁵

According to Malathi Pradhan, aged 35, a Christian lady lived in Bakingia with her Hindu neighbours, on 26 August 2008, she left her home for the camp at Raikia. Her Hindu neighbours kept her valuables and wished her for her safety. After 6 months when she returned home, she found her house looted and her goats confiscated by the Hindu activists. She harvested the paddy with the help of the Hindu neighbours.⁶²⁶

Akkara recorded in his books that Rajesh Digal, a young evangelical pastor, was returning to his village Bakingia from Hyderabad. His bus was stopped at Bapuni on 26 August by a mob searching for Christians. They questioned Rajesh and found him to be a Christian. They forced him to become a Hindu, but he refused, so they put him in a pit and filled it with mud till his neck and gave him a final chance to give up his faith. When he refused to deny, they crushed his head with a boulder. Later, his body was removed by the mob, and they disposed of it secretly. The police refused to register a murder case, saying that the body had not been found. The state government later admitted his death in May 2009 and granted compensation to his family.⁶²⁷

Karthik Nayak, a school teacher narrated the happenings of his village as follows:

On 26 August 2008, Barakhama village Hindus had a meeting to attack Christians and had a procession, raising slogans like *Jai Ram* (Victory to the God of Ram), *Jai Bharath Matha* (Victory to the Mother India), and they warned the Christians through a microphone saying, "Convert to Hinduism or leave the village". Two of the Christians went to the police station and made

⁶²⁵ Interview with Ms. Kadampula Nayak, Ms. Sarapathi Nayak, Simon Nayak, Padmanaba Pradhan and Jiram Pradhan on 01/11/2016. Appendix 4. Cf. Interim Report on Orissa-Concerned Citizens' Independent Fact-Finding Mission, Sep. 25, 2008, by sacw.net, Sep.29, 2008.

⁶²⁶ Interview with Ms. Malathi Pradhan on 01/11/2016. Appendix 4.

⁶²⁷ Op. cit., Anto Akkara, *Kandhamal Craves...*, 45. Cf. Op. cit., Anto Akkara, *Early Christians...*, 25.

a complaint about the recent development; they were assured protection. This time, all the Christians decided not to run away because even if we ran away, we were followed and killed. So, they all gathered in one house and hid. At first, the mob attacked the churches and came to know the place where the Christians were hiding. They all came with local guns and axes. When we heard the sound nearing our hiding place, we tried to escape from the house; at that time, Ajub Digal, 22, was shot and died. We also retaliated by throwing some crude bombs, so the mob went back without causing any further damage to us. Praful Kumar Nayak, 55, one of the two persons who went to the police station the previous day to ask for protection, was beaten to death. Miss. Manini Digal, 22, who was at home in the other side of the village, was raped and burnt alive, but she survived with wounds. In the meantime, more police arrived in the village, and the situation was controlled.⁶²⁸

Sibaju in G. Udayagiri Block is a Christian village situated in the interior forest area of Kandhamal. According to Vishwanath Digal and Sumantho Digal, the villagers were not aware of the happenings outside the village. On 26 August 2008, morning 10 o'clock a group of people, carrying weapons, came to their village shouting slogans (*Jai Ram*) and started to attack the houses. The mob was so big and violent that all the villagers fled to the jungle. The mob looted the valuables and then destroyed the houses and burnt it till 4 pm. Cattles and paddy fields were looted. All the villagers went to the camp at Udayagiri, moved from camp to camp, until they could return to their respective villages in September 2010. The houses were rebuilt with the compensation received, of an amount ranging from rupees 30,000 to 70,000. Churches like Vishvawani and Believers' also helped to build the houses and the church.⁶²⁹

According to Akkara and others, Abhimanyu Nayak, aged 41, a former from Barapalli village in Raikia Block lived with his wife and four children. There were four Christian families in that village. Abhimanyu used to sleep outside the house. On the night of 26 August, a group of Hindus came with arms and asked Abhimanyu to accept Hinduism. When he refused, they tied his hands and dragged him outside the village and tied him against a tree and burned alive. Somehow he escaped from the fire, but he

⁶²⁸ Interview with Karthik Nayak on 29/10/2016. Appendix 4. Cf. Dibakar Parichha and Santosh Kumar Digal, *Kandhamal Massacre of the Innocents* (New Delhi: Integrity Media, 2015), 43 & 113.

⁶²⁹ Interview with Vishwanath Digal and Sumantho Digal on 01/11/2016. Appendix 4.

died the next afternoon due to the absence of medical treatment. The police came to rescue the body on the fifth day of the incident. Till then, his wife protected the burnt body of her husband from being eaten by animals and birds.⁶³⁰

7.6.5 Wednesday 27 August

Akkara also recorded in his book *Shining Faith in Kandhamal* that on 27 August morning a violent mob entered Sulesaru village in Tikabali Block and attacked the Christian houses. All Christians in the village fled to the jungle. Akbar Digal, a pastor of Believers' Church from Totomaha village, was staying at Sulesaru. Akbar asked his wife Lydia and five-year-old son to run away from the place, so they ran to the jungle. The mob destroyed the church and searched for the pastor. They found him in the turmeric field where he was hiding. They dragged him to the front of the community hall where he was tortured and stabbed in the neck and stomach. They cut his legs with axes. When he died, they stripped him naked and burnt the body with petrol. On that night, Lydia and her son stayed in one of the Hindu's houses who gave them food and shelter. Next day on 28 August, the mob once again set fire on the partially burnt body of Akbar. The CRPF reached the village and found ashes and burnt the bones of Akbar Digal. They took Lydia to the police station to file the case before sending her to the relief camp.⁶³¹

According to Sournalatha Nayak and Lodu Digal, Parikhitha Nayak, aged 35, his wife Kanakrekha and two children lived in Tiangia. On 27 August 2008, Parikhitha Nayak took his wife and two children by bicycle to the nearby village where his relatives were lived. While nearing the village called Gumandi, a group of people stopped him, attacked him and dragged him towards the river, leaving his wife and children. They murdered him and mutilate the body and burnt it. On the next day, the police took the burnt body for post-mortem and buried him at Raikia. His wife received a compensation of Rs. 500,000.⁶³²

According to Akkara, Anandeswar Nayak, a 36-year-old farmer, lived in Tiangia with his wife and three children. On 27 August 2008, a violent mob entered the village with weapons. Local Hindu activists joined them in looting and torching the Christian

⁶³⁰ Op. cit., Anto Akkara, *Early Christians...*, 22. Cf. Op. cit., Dibakar Parichha and Santosh Kumar Digal, 33.

⁶³¹ Anto Akkara, *Shining Faith in Kandhamal* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2011), 39.

⁶³² Interview with Sournalatha Nayak and Lodu Digal on 31/10/2016. Appendix 4. Cf. Op. cit., Dibakar Parichha and Santosh Kumar Digal, 103.

houses. They caught hold of Anandeswar and asked him to renounce Christianity, the foreign religion. But he stood firm saying, “Even if I have to die, I will not give up my faith in Christ”. The mob got infuriated over his response and started beating him. They threatened to rape his wife and kill his children. In the meantime, Suresh Pradhan, a prominent Hindu of the area came along the way. He requested the mob to release Anandeswar. The mob immediately released Anandeswar. He fled with his wife and children to the jungle. After staying in the jungle for five days, they moved to the refugee camp at Raikia.⁶³³

7.6.6 28 August 2008 to 11 January 2009

Jitendra Pradhan, aged 27, from Padangi village of Sarangagarh Block was a small civil contractor. On 28th morning, police took him from his house to the Sarangod police station. After some time, he was taken to Phulbani police barracks saying that his neighbour Hiralra who was arrested for killing Swami named him for the same. He was with others for 40 days.⁶³⁴

Elias Digal, Francis Digal and Zacharias, the villagers of Sibapanga village in Raikia Block, shared that on 30 August, the mob came again to Sibapanga village, vandalised and demolished the houses completely and burnt them. At the same time, they caught all these 13 family members and threatened them to convert to Hinduism or else they would be killed. Considering the situation, they agreed. Some Hindu ceremonies were performed. They were asked to burn the Bible and urinate on them. They were asked to join the mob to demolish houses and the church. However, these 13 families returned to the Christian fold after the crisis was over.⁶³⁵

They further shared that on 5 September, two CRPF policemen went to Sibapanga village while patrolling the area. The Hindus caught one policeman and killed him, but the other one escaped. The villagers alleged that the CRPF was guarding the Christians.⁶³⁶

According to Akkara, on 20 September 2008, Ishwar Digal and his wife Runima Digal visited their looted and damaged house at Gutingia in Tikabali Block. The couple was walking towards the main road to catch a bus to the refugee camp at G. Udayagiri

⁶³³ Op. cit., Anto Akkara, *Early Christians...*, 88.

⁶³⁴ Anto Akkara, *Who Killed Swami Lakshmanananda?* (Thrissur: Veritas India Books, 2016), 107.

⁶³⁵ Interview with Elias Digal, Francis Digal and Zacharias on 01/11/2016. Appendix 4.

⁶³⁶ Ibid.

when a dozen Hindu activists attacked Ishwar. They ridiculed him by saying “How dare you to return here without becoming Hindu?” He was killed, and his body was cut into pieces. His wife Runima Digal was thrown by the roadside and became unconscious. When she regained consciousness, nobody was around even her husband’s body. She reported to the CRPF camp at Papungia that was a kilometre away. They came to the spot where the murder took place, but there was no sign of murder not even the blood stains. The police refused to acknowledge the murder and didn’t register a criminal case due to lack of evidence. However, repeated complaints and inquiry reports confirming the killing made the officials to relent and acknowledge the murder after eight months. In April 2009, Runima got a compensation of Rs. 500,000. But the culprits were not arrested.⁶³⁷

According to the Report of National People’s Tribunal on Kandhamal, on 21 September 2008, a young Hindu girl from Bapalomonti village in Chokapad Block was dragged out of her uncle’s house by a mob, taken to the jungle and gang-raped. The gruesome act was in retribution for her uncle’s stubbornness to remain in Christianity.⁶³⁸

Akkara recorded in his book *Early Christians of 21st Century* that Lalita Digal from Dodaballi village in Nuagaon Block stayed in the refugee camp at K. Nuagam after the Kandhamal riots in August 2008. On 21 November 2008, she went back to her village to harvest her ripe paddy crop presuming that peace had been restored. After two days, her son Prakash Digal, who was in the refugee camp, received a message that his mother had been killed. He went to the village in search of the body of his mother but could not find it. The villagers told him that she was killed and her body was burnt by the activists. All evidence of the murder had been wiped out. The police and government officials refused to accept the murders without tracing the body. After a persistent campaign by action groups, Lalita’s name was added in the death list in May 2009.⁶³⁹

Susila Digal wife of Late. Jubalraj Digal narrated her story as follows:

My husband was actively involved in the peace committee after the August 2008 riots. He thought that there was normalcy in his area. So, as a contractor,

⁶³⁷ Op. cit., Anto Akkara, *Early Christians...*, 69.

⁶³⁸ A Report of National People’s Tribunal on Kandhamal, New Delhi, 2010. P 51. Nirmala Niketan, *Study of the Conditions of Women Affected by Communal Violence in Kandhamal District, Orissa* (Mumbai: College of Social Work, 2010), 31.

⁶³⁹ Op. cit., Anto Akkara, *Early Christians...*, 175.

he went by bike with his second son Vidyadhar Digal, 13, to Sithabanga, a neighbouring village on 16 December 2008. While returning, around 5 p.m. a group of people stopped them and began to beat them; our son got severely hit on his face in spite of wearing a helmet. He managed to escape and climbed up a tree and stayed there until the darkness. In the meantime, his father Jubalraj Digal was taken to the riverside. They beat him to death and burnt the body on a rock which was in the middle of the river. My son got down from the tree at the night, ran to Udayagiri police station and made a complaint. He was admitted in the hospital and treated for two months. Police went to Sithabanga and enquired, but they couldn't get any evidence of his body because they burnt the body and flushed it in the river. The following day they got a burnt rosary, and with that, the police confirmed the death of Jubalraj Digal.⁶⁴⁰

Akkara also recorded that on 11 January 2009, presuming that peace has been restored, Savitri Nayak, the widow of Madan Nayak, returned to her village Dokedi in G. Udayagiri Block. But the Hindu activists stopped her and asked: "Why have you come back here as a Christian?" They poured kerosene on her and were about to burn her alive. However, an elderly Hindu of the village intervened shouted at them and asked them to let her go. The activists warned her not to come to the village as long as she was a Christian and sent her out of the village. She returned to the refugee camp.⁶⁴¹

The villagers of Sibapanga said that they had stayed in the camp for 7 months. Saony Digal, aged 75, died in the camp. All others returned to the village in the month of March 2009, rebuilt the houses with the help of the government's compensation of Rs. 50,000 and the Christian aids from outside. The government also gave them utensils. They started to cultivate their land and resettled. The church was rebuilt by the diocese. Three families migrated elsewhere. There is no fear now, but they lost their close community life.⁶⁴²

⁶⁴⁰ Interview with Susila Digal wife of Jubraj Digal on 30/10/2016. Appendix 4 Cf. Op. cit., Dibakar Parichha and Santosh Kumar Digal, 75.

⁶⁴¹ Op. cit., Anto Akkara, *Early Christians...*, 73.

⁶⁴² Interview with Elias Digal, Francis Digal and Zacharias on 01/11/2016. Appendix 4.

7.7 Conclusion

In the year 2007, riots were well planned. They chose the time of Christmas to address a local issue that was non-religious, but the Sangh Parivar used the issue to unite the tribals and then cleverly turned it into a religious communal issue. So, the rioters attacked Christians and destroyed the properties of Christians including churches.

Swami Lakshmanananda played a vital role in instigating the violence. He chose the festival seasons to disturb the Christians in Kandhamal. The Sangh Parivar used to use the local media to spread rumours what would aggregate and spread the violence. The attacks on the Christian houses and other establishments were meant to destabilise their economy as well as to pressurise them to convert to Hinduism.

Even the death of Swami Lakshmanananda was used as an opportunity by the Sangh Parivar to execute their agenda with a proper plan. Christians were attacked and killed, properties damaged and looted. Destroying the churches, institutions and converting the Christians to Hinduism became the prime activities of the Hindu mobs.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SALIENT FEATURES OF VIOLENCE AND THE ROLE OF DIFFERENT PEOPLE

8.1 Introduction

Many of the victims witnessed the meetings held by the culprits prior to the violent incidences, to organise financial and other forms of supports to execute the violence. The availability of weapons used, the way mobs were organised, the availability of burning materials in and around the places of incidents and the immediate transportation of the looted property seem to collaborate with the accounts of the witnesses.⁶⁴³ Therefore, one can safely conclude that the attacks were executed with considerable premeditation, planning and preparation.

Soroj Mallick, a Hindu leader of Kui Samaj stated that,

Killings and attacks were brutal in nature, and the leaders of the Christian communities were the main targets. Rape and public humiliation of women seem to have been used to take revenge because the RSS leaders sent a message to all village units that Swami Lakshmanananda was killed, and his private part was cut. The woman who died along with him was raped, and her private parts were damaged. So the RSS wanted to kill Christian fathers, nuns and pastors in the same manner.⁶⁴⁴

Burning and destruction of property of the Christians was also a predominant form of violence. The movable property was looted, and certificates of educational qualifications, and valuable documents, land and property records were deliberately destroyed in order to bring down the socio-economic condition of the victim-survivors. Evidence of the violent events was destroyed systematically to disrupt the process of justice and answerability. Burning the bodies or dumping them in the jungles to be devoured and destroyed by wild animals, and dumping them in flowing rivers were employed to avoid prosecution of the culprits for want of evidence. If there was no evidence of the murder, the compensation to the dependent family was also to be denied. Human rights defenders and social workers were also targeted for their roles in

⁶⁴³ Op. cit., Saumya Uma, 30.

⁶⁴⁴ Interview with Soroj Mallick on 02/11/16. (Head of Kui Samaj). Appendix 4.

advocating the victims and assisting them with aid, rehabilitation, relief and in the process of bringing justice.⁶⁴⁵

8.2 The slogans used in the riots

The following are examples of the slogans the violent mobs were shouting prior to and at the time of attacks:

Bajrang Bali ki Jai (Hail Hanuman)⁶⁴⁶ *Jai Shri Ram* (Hail Ram), *Bharat maata ki jai* (Hail to Mother India)⁶⁴⁷

Bideshi dharma hatao, Hindu Rashtra badhao (Eliminate the foreign religion, create a Hindu nation)⁶⁴⁸

Christian mananku maro (Kill Christians), *Christian dharma chalega nahi* (Christian religion will not remain), *Christian ghora jail diya* (Burn the Christian houses), *Christian rakhiba nahin* (Will not allow the Christians to stay), *Christian bideshi mananku mara, ei tharu todidia* (Thrash the Christian foreigners, chase them out from the area)⁶⁴⁹

Christian dharma nahin chalega (Christianity is not acceptable), *Hindu Hindu bhai bhai* (All Hindus are brothers)⁶⁵⁰

8.3 Experiences of women in Kandhamal during the riots

Women were the worst sufferers of any communal violence. Apart from the rampant murders and terrorising acts of the Hindu activists, women were particularly subjected to violent sexual assaults, including gang-raping and public display of their naked bodies such as in the case of Ms. Priyatama from Dutukagam village, Sister Barwa from Kanjamendi and Miss. Manini Digal from Barakhama village. As refugees, their journeys involved physical hardship and lack of shelter, food, water, clothes to wear and other basic necessities. They had suffered all forms of persecutions and distress at the time of violence and post-violence period. They faced violence in various forms

⁶⁴⁵ Op. cit., Saumya Uma, 29.

⁶⁴⁶ Op. cit., A Report by PUCL, 6.

⁶⁴⁷ Interview with Thoma Nayak, Elio Nayak and Tunakumar Nayak on 29/10/2016. Cf. Joanna Mallec, "Anti-Christian violence in the Indian State of Orissa in 2008 in the reports of non-governmental organizations" *Orientalia Christiana Cracoviensia*, 3, 2011. 99. A fact finding report, *From Kandhamal to Karavali: The Ugly Face of Sangh Parivar*, 2009, p. 30.

⁶⁴⁸ Interview with Karmila Nayak, Louisa Singh on 30/10/16.

⁶⁴⁹ Interview with Amona Nayak on 31/10/16. Interview with Krisanth Mullick on 01/11/16. *Report by National People's Tribunal on Kandhamal* (New Delhi: 2010), p. 27.

⁶⁵⁰ Interview with Vishwanath Digal, Suresh Kumar Digal and Sumantho Digal on 01/11/16.

and degrees. Apart from the physical violence such as beating, women faced burn injuries, paralysis and malaria due to extremely stressful and insanitary living conditions in the jungle and the relief camps. Verbal abuses, murders, threats of rape and forced conversions were rampantly encountered.⁶⁵¹ There were many cases of rape and attempt to rape. Forced conversion was also a form of psychological violence. The conversion process itself was humiliating, where they were compelled to drink cow urine mixed with cow dung as a purification rite.

According to Saumya Uma, about 12 women were killed during the violence. The elderly and immobilised women who were left behind at home died without care. They were reportedly killed by the mob in some cases. Several women delivered their babies in the jungle without even basic facilities. Even at the relief camps, pregnant women did not get proper care and sufficient food. Women who delivered babies in the camp also did not get proper medical care. The specific needs of women, particularly contraceptive, reproductive health care and sanitary protection for menstruating women, were not accessible. Many women did not get access to women doctors or nurses.⁶⁵²

The violence and warlike situations had its immediate impact on the security and human rights of all sections of people in the region. The basic social, economic and political rights of the victims were violated. Schools were closed, healthcare services got diminished, economy weakened, jobs were lost, essential commodities were not available and the human relationship broken. Displacement of people and forced migration were the intended goals of the aggressors. In most of the cases in Kandhamal, whole families were chased out from homes, abandoning their livelihoods and valuables. Children were scattered to different homes and convents for safety and education, particularly girls were sent away for their protection. Some of the girls were sent away to earn money from petty jobs like a housemaid. Single women and young widows preferred to move to cities to earn their livelihood from any job they could get. These placements were mostly done by pastors and representatives of some

⁶⁵¹ Op. cit., Saumya Uma, 32.

⁶⁵² Ibid., 37. Cf. *Genocide in Kandhamal: Ethnic Cleansing of Christians by Hindutwa Rightwing Forces in Orissa* (Human Rights Law Network, December, 2008), 17. http://idsn.org/uploads/media/Orissa_report_-_Human_Rights_Law_Network.pdf. Accessed on 30/12/2017.

organisations. These girls and women were at the risk of sexual violence and vulnerable to human trafficking.⁶⁵³

Lack of job opportunities and the refusal of Hindu employers were the prominent reasons for the financial difficulties faced by the Christian women. These women had to deal with loneliness, became dependent and faced threat from the Hindu fundamentalists. Women were affected psychologically by the violence. They suffered from depression due to the death of family members in the violence, anxiety about the future, feelings of insecurity, stress and feelings of loneliness particularly those who lost their spouses in the violence. The communal violence also destroyed relationships between the communities and traditional bonds and replaced it with mutual resentment, mistrust and suspicion between the communities. Women also encountered many hurdles in getting justice. In fact, some of them did not lodge complaints or testify for fear of being stigmatised or fear of further attacks, fear of cumbersome procedure in producing medical evidence, loss of or inadequate documents to claim compensation or inheritance, and the indifferent attitude of the authorities and police towards them and to their plights.⁶⁵⁴

8.4 Impacts of violence on children

The violent events had an impact on the development of children. Those who affected and witnessed the violence time and again feel that the situation is antipathetic and unsafe. Exposure to the violence had created distrust of adults and fear of other communities in them. It had weakened the children's feeling of safety and confidence on adults. Reactions of the children could be in different forms. These children were usually affected by anxiety, fear or seclusion. They also had a problem of internalising or taking fears inward. Some even had developed an attitude of using violence as a means to have power over others.⁶⁵⁵

Children expressed their anxieties through interactions. The adolescent children shared their feelings by the following statements. "We lost all our hopes! We now don't have any aim in life! Our future is tarnished by this violence! We have no peace; even now we are staying with fear. When we see the rioters, we feel like revenge. We are

⁶⁵³ Op. cit., Saumya Uma, 65.

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid., 48.

⁶⁵⁵ HAQ: Centre for Child Rights, *Kandhamal's Forgotten Children A Status Report* (New Delhi: National Solidarity Forum, 2010), 11.

depressed because of discrimination among classmates. We don't play, because they (from the other community) are not keen to play".⁶⁵⁶ They had nightmares of mob chasing them and members of their family in the forest. They were frightened by loud noise and were terrified of people walking in groups and shouting. They felt sad when they remember the moment their small brothers' or sisters' mouth was shut with clothes or hands forcefully so that their cries would not be heard by the attackers. They often sat alone and cried quietly.⁶⁵⁷

The victims felt intense horror, fear or helplessness. They were disturbed by distressing remembrances of events (images, thoughts), nightmares, flashbacks, and emotions as if the events were returning and happening again. The victims tried to avert activities, individuals or spots that remembered the events and to stay away from the people and felt separated and isolated, suffering from lack of concentration, and overinflated anxious responses.⁶⁵⁸ Some of them had been directly exposed to some violent events and horrific happenings. For example, a small boy saw a dog eating the corpse of a victim. The boy was horrified by that scene. He experienced an intense shock which profoundly affected his school education. He was unable to concentrate on his studies.⁶⁵⁹ Children were also filled with anger and a feeling of revenge. These traumatised children had very limited resources to handle these challenges. Children struggled to concentrate on current affairs because their emotional strength was used to disremember the past. There was a danger that some children who had the initial shock and fear of violence may not show immediate indications related to post-traumatic pressure, but it may develop later in life.⁶⁶⁰

At the time of riots, the schools were extremely affected as most of the camps were functioning in school campuses. Schools were closed for many months, which had severe impacts on the education of the children. About 40 schools were converted to relief or CRPF camps. Parents put their children in residential schools somewhere even in other states of the country. They were desperate about the condition in their village and believed that their kids would be safer in the school hostel. Many children

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid., 12.

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid., 12.

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid., 13.

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid., 14.

who were preparing for the secondary board exam could not register in time because of the violence; they had to take a voluntary break from their studies.⁶⁶¹

During the time of violence, hostels and schools were attacked and all their furniture were destroyed. In schools, chairs, cupboards, desks and teaching materials were either damaged or ransacked. All doors and windows were badly damaged both in the schools and in the hostels. The schools and hostels were not being able to function as before. In the schools, earlier there were desks and benches for all the classes, but after the violence, only a few classes had desks and benches. The mob damaged the water pump; hence now, students had to rely on well water for drinking and other purposes. Soon after the violence, the government had provided some textbooks, some furniture and one computer. As most of the hostels lacked windows, doors and mosquito nets, many inmates were affected by malaria. The lack of basic facilities made children to struggle everyday which was also impeding the progress of their recovery from the stress of violence. A sense of humiliation and injustice prevailed among children which may affect their physical and mental growth and development.⁶⁶²

After the violence, many high school children dropped out of school. An involuntary break of one academic year was imposed on all the children, and they had to study in the same class again. In Barakhama village alone, about 40 boys and 10 girls studying in classes from 9th to 12th standards dropped out of school as their parents couldn't afford to pay their school fees. Many boys went to other states like Kerala and Gujarat for job. They were working as coolies in stone quarries or construction sites. Parents did not know about their children's working conditions and the kind of occupation they were in.⁶⁶³

After the communal violence, increasing numbers of people migrated to other districts of the state and other states of the country for work, and their children went along with them. Many girls moved to urban places for domestic labour. There were incidents like trafficking the girls to major cities for domestic labour. Sometimes they were pushed into prostitution. Some local persons of the district, who played the role of middlemen, gave false promises to the family members about job offers took the children and handed over them to the traffickers. There are no centralised data available

⁶⁶¹ Ibid., 17.

⁶⁶² Ibid., 23.

⁶⁶³ Ibid., 25.

on children who are in need for care and protection particularly after the violence at the social welfare, police or healthcare departments.⁶⁶⁴

8.5 The role of the Hindu neighbours

In most of the cases, people from the same village and the same community members were the reported perpetrators. The prominent Hindu leaders in every village led the mob and networked with outsiders for successful execution of their plans. The local Hindu leaders warned the Christians by saying, “If you do not become a Hindu, you cannot stay in the village.” They also warned their own fellow Hindus who might have had sympathy towards Christians not to help anyone. In some places, Hindu women helped the mobs identify Christian houses and properties to be attacked. During the period of *karvacy* (forced conversion ceremony), Hindu women were part of the mob to perform the rituals of conversion to Hinduism.⁶⁶⁵

On the other hand, there were incidents where people of the Hindu faith risked their own lives to extend all possible helps to their Christian neighbours. Fr. Chellan and Sister Barwa were given shelter in the house of a Hindu. Even persons like Dasarath Pradhan and Sidheswar Pradhan as Hindus gave their own lives to protect Christians. Malathi Pradhan was saved by her Hindu neighbours who also safeguarded her moveable properties, including cattle, grains and valuable documents. On several occasions, when Christian families were hiding in the forest, some Hindu women provided them with food, shelter and clothing. In many places, it was the Hindu neighbours who alerted the Christians to flee to the forests before the mob reached their villages.⁶⁶⁶

8.6 The role of outsiders

During the 1980s and 1990s, the religious violence was witnessed in small pockets and local levels within the village communities. However, from 2007, it became an organised violence instigated by Hindu fundamentalists. Swami Lakshmanananda led the attacks on Christians during the time of Christmas celebration wherein villagers attacked their neighbouring villages. The following year, in 2008, the Sangh Parivar

⁶⁶⁴ Ibid., 28.

⁶⁶⁵ Op. cit., Saumya Uma, 36.

⁶⁶⁶ Fr. Thomas Chellan, “A Hindu mob began our crucifixion,” *Catholic Information and News Service*. <http://www.vaticans.org/index.php?/archives/1240-A-Hindu-mob-began-our-crucifixion-parade>. Accessed on 18/05/2017.

took advantage of Swami Lakshmanananda's murder and mobilised people from all over Odisha and even from outside Odisha against the Christians. A huge group of people with deadly weapons were brought in by trucks to a particular place wherein they were joined by the locals to launch attacks on Christians and their houses. Petrol, diesel or kerosene was used to burn the churches and properties and to destroy the evidence. Additional trucks were also provisioned to carry the looted articles, and most of the lootings were carried out by outsiders.

8.7 The role of the state and police

In view of the large-scale arson, loots, human rights violation and mass killings carried out during the riots in Kandhamal, the role and responses of the state have often been questioned. Was the state and district administration inactive? Did the democratic institutions established to protect the basic rights of the people perform their duty? Were there enough police forces to control the situation?

There was a suspicion on the state government because, during the time of the riots in 2007 and 2008, the BJP was part of the ruling coalition government in the State of Odisha. The state administration gave permission to the funeral procession of Swami Lakshmanananda which was planned to take a long route of over 150 km passing through several towns and villages. The government also permitted the VHP national leader Pravin Togadia, who had been barred from entering the state for his inflammatory speech, to participate in the funeral procession.⁶⁶⁷

The police seemed to be unsure of how far they could go against the Sangh Parivar in view of their proximity to the government of the day. In most cases, political leaders were part of the mob. Moreover, the majority of the local police were supporters of the Sangh Parivar. In some places, the police stations were attacked and fired by the mob, so the policemen were under the threat of their own lives.⁶⁶⁸

In the gang rape of Sister Meena Barwa and torture of Fr. Chellan in Kanjamendi, the police were mere spectators. Even after they were brought into the police station, they were humiliated and discouraged to file the First Information Reports (FIR). The local police apparently failed to respond to violent situations.⁶⁶⁹ In

⁶⁶⁷ Op. cit., Anto Akkara, *Kandhamal a Blot...*, 19.

⁶⁶⁸ Op. cit., Angana P. Chatterji, *Violent Gods...*, 250. Cf. Op. cit., JPDC, 27, 184.

⁶⁶⁹ Interview with Fr. Cassian Pradhan on 03/11/2016. Interview with Kumuda Kumar Nayak a social worker of Jana Vikas on 04/11/2016. Appendix 4. Cf. Op. cit., Anto Akkara, *Early Christians...*, 60.

many cases, the police reached the spot after two or three days to collect dead bodies for post-mortem, in spite of being informed of the incidents of violence immediately.⁶⁷⁰

According to Teesta Setalvad, 3300 complaints were received from victims in the local police stations. However, only one-fourth of them (831) were registered with FIR. Most cases were not investigated properly, and the accused were not arrested. The police department made no serious effort to bring justice to the victims, so the investigation part lacked proper evidence to be produced in many cases. Only 269 were convicted, and the others were acquitted.⁶⁷¹ These statistics show how the police and the state administrative system favoured the Sangh Parivar. The mobs had fear only for the CRPF which was not deployed in all villages.⁶⁷²

8.8 The debate on the number of murders in the Odisha violence

According to the report of the Vice-Chairman of the National Commission for Minorities, “the State Government estimates that 17 people were killed while 2,853 houses and 127 institutions were either destroyed or damaged. Unofficial estimates say that the actual figures are much higher. Since Government estimates are based on confirmed figures alone, the unofficial estimates are probably closer to the truth”.⁶⁷³ The National Commission for Justice, Peace, and Development of Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India reported 38 died in the communal violence.⁶⁷⁴ The other Christian organisations came out with different numbers. The data collected by the Evangelical Fellowship of India⁶⁷⁵ was 42, by Christian Legal Association⁶⁷⁶ was 58, and the Jana Vikas reported 86 killings.

The state government formed the panel on 8 September 2008, after the burst of communal riots in Kandhamal District as well as other parts of Odisha following the

⁶⁷⁰ Interview with Jambothi Digal and Mariamai Nayak on 31/10/2016.

⁶⁷¹ Teesta setalvad, *Kandhamal, 8 years later: No sign of Justice for victims of Sangh Parivar’s communal onslaught*, 2016. <https://sabrangindia.in/article/kandhamal-8-years-later-no-sign-justice-victims-sangh-parivar%E2%80%99s-communal-onslaught>. Accessed on 30/12/2017.

⁶⁷² Interview with Elias Digal, Francis Digal and Zacharias Digal on 01/11/2016.

⁶⁷³ National Commission for Minorities, NCM Report on the Visit of the Vice Chairperson NCM to Orissa – 11th to 13th September, 2008, <http://ncm.nic.in/Tour-Reports.html> p. 2. Accessed 09/02/2018.

⁶⁷⁴ Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India, Report of CBCI Commission for Justice, Peace and Development, <http://storage.paxchristi.net/2008-0745-en-apRV.pdf>. Accessed 09/02/2018.

⁶⁷⁵ Evangelical Fellowship of India, Orissa Christian Persecution Fact-Finding Report of Evangelical Fellowship of India, September 2008, <http://www.southasianconnection.com/blogs/995/Orissa-Christian-Persecution-Fact-Finding-Report.html>. Accessed 09/02/2018.

⁶⁷⁶ Christian Legal Association, *Report on Anti-Christian Violence in Indian State of Orissa*, New Delhi, Nov. 2008, http://indianchristians.in/news/images/resources/pdf/2008_CLA_Orissa_Briefing_Paper.pdf p. 5. Accessed 09/02/2018.

murder of Swami Lakshmanananda Saraswati and four of his companions at his Chakapada Ashram on 23 August 2008. The murder activated communal violence in Kandhamal and adjacent places in which about 38 persons were killed. Initially, Justice Sarat Chandra Mohapatra was entrusted with the enquiry. But after his demise, Justice A. S. Naidu took charge of the head of the one-man commission in 2012. The Kandhamal riots report was submitted to Odisha government on 23 December 2015 by Justice A. S. Naidu.⁶⁷⁷

According to the Odisha Forum for Social Action report, 100 deaths were confirmed (see the Appendix), 12 injuries, 8406 houses were damaged, 395 churches were damaged, 177 shops were damaged, 40 women were assaulted, 56,000 people were affected including 12,000 children, and 415 villages of Kandhamal were affected during the 2007 and 2008 riots.⁶⁷⁸ Different investigation groups were given different toll of deaths. But the state government considered only 32 murder cases for compensation.⁶⁷⁹ Other deaths were considered as natural even a person died in the forest by snake bite while hiding to save his/her life from the mob. The *Centre for the Sustainable Use of Natural and Social Resources (CSNR)* recorded 38⁶⁸⁰ cases, and the Report by National People's Tribunal on Kandhamal recorded 54 deaths.⁶⁸¹ The government refused to accept the fact due to lack of evidence. Thirty-three murder cases were closed due to lack of evidence. There were convictions in only two murder cases with life sentences to just 10 people.⁶⁸²

8.9 Peace-building role of the government

In order to pacify the majority Hindus of the State of Odisha, the police detained seven Christians from various locations in different dates and filed the FIR against them as killers of Swami Lakshmanananda. The details are as follows: Munda Badamajhi, aged 36, a Christian was picked up by the police from his house on 4 October 2008 from Duringipadi village of Baliguda Block. The police filed the FIR against him that he was

⁶⁷⁷ PTI, "Justice Naidu Commission submits report on Kandhamal riots," *Times of India*, 22/12/15. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bhubaneswar/Justice-Naidu-Commission-submits-report-on-Kandhamal-riots/articleshow/50282612.cms>. Accessed on 08/02/2018.

⁶⁷⁸ Op. cit., Ajay Kumar Singh, *Kandhamal Images*, 3.

⁶⁷⁹ Saumya Uma, *Kandhamal: The Law Must Change Its Course* (New Delhi: Multiple Action Research Group, 2010), 78.

⁶⁸⁰ "Unjust compensation: an assessment of damage and loss of private property during the anti-Christian violence in Kandhamal, India," *Centre for the Sustainable Use of Natural and Social Resources (CSNR)*, Bhubaneswar, 2013. p. 3.

⁶⁸¹ *Report by National People's Tribunal on Kandhamal* (New Delhi: 2010), p. 17.

⁶⁸² Op. cit., Ajay Kumar Singh, *Kandhamal Images*, 4.

with a mob of about 30 people who killed Swami and seized a muzzle-loading gun from his house.⁶⁸³

Duryodhan Sunamajhi, aged about 36, a Christian from Badagaon village of Chakapada Block was taken to the police station on 4 October night from his house and was charged for killing Swami and seizing a gun from his house.⁶⁸⁴

Sanatan Badamajhi, aged 31, a Christian from Landabali village of Kotagarh Block was arrested on 5 October night by the police at his house. They filed the FIR against him that he was part of the Swami's killers group and they found an axe and a shirt with holes which could be used as masks.⁶⁸⁵

Budhadeb Nayak, aged about 45, a Christian from Kilanga village of Tumudibandha Block was arrested on 13 December by the police who charged him for criminal conspiracy against Swami Lakshmanananda.⁶⁸⁶

Gornath Challanseth, aged 39, a Christian from Sartul village of Kotagarh Block was taken to the police station on 13 October and accused of distributing sweets in the church on the day of Swami's death and having a meeting with the Maoists.⁶⁸⁷

Bhaskar Sunamajhi, aged 33, a Christian from Kutiguda village of Baliguda Block was taken to the police station on 13 December from his village while he was playing cards. His wife and others did not know the reason. Later, they came to know that he was charged for killing Swami Lakshmanananda. Police recorded that he was spotted in the jungle with three other Christian accused.⁶⁸⁸

Bijay Kumar Sanaseth, aged 37, a Christian, a government civil contractor from Kotagada village of Kotagarh Block was called by the police to the station for an enquiry. On 13 December 2008, he went to the police station where he was arrested for the charges of killing Swami Lakshmanananda. He was accused of being part of the conspiracy to murder the Swami and distributing sweets in the Kotagarh church after the Swami's murder.⁶⁸⁹

⁶⁸³ Anto Akkara, *Who Killed Swami Lakshmanananda?* (Thrissur: Veritas India Books, 2016), 121.

⁶⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 128.

⁶⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁶⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 132.

⁶⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 134.

⁶⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 116.

⁶⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 124.

All these seven Christians were in jail from day one. Their bail applications were rejected. Finally, they were convicted in the murder case of Swami Lakshmanananda and sentenced to lifetime imprisonment by the Additional Sessions Judge, Phubani Court on 3rd of October 2013.⁶⁹⁰

After the period of violence, in April 2009, the Kandhamal Administration started peace-building processes to restore the peace and harmony among the communities. The initiatives of the administration included the peace committee and *Antaranga* which means ‘celebrating diversity’. *Antaranga* scheme was proposed by the Collector of Kandhamal. “*Antaranga* aimed at initiating a peace process within the village by involving the youths and building the trust through organising programmes and meetings among the communities. Accordingly, *Antaranga* clubs were formed in the villages. NGOs were invited to take the responsibilities of running clubs in their respective blocks.”⁶⁹¹ The clubs distributed sports materials and books. Initially, the clubs were active in organising programmes for the locals. However, the programme was not continued by many villages because the NGOs did not give the leadership to the locals.⁶⁹²

The government had also formed peace committees in various villages when the victims returned to their villages from the camps. In the beginning, few meetings were held to convince the people to resettle in the villages. Government representatives and police personnel formed part of the committee. The committee consisted of people representing communities, village-level worker, *Sarpanch* (village head) and ward member. The committee included many people who were involved in the violence. There was a threat from the perpetrators who were part of the peace committee and pressurised the victims to withdraw the cases filed against them. In fact, the whole concept of a peace committee was active in print, but its implementation was very poor in reality.⁶⁹³

8.10 The role of media

According to Fr.Cassian Pradhan, on the night of 23 August 2008, the news channels broadcasted an earlier incident where Swami Lakshmanananda was attacked by the

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid., 301.

⁶⁹¹ Ibid.

⁶⁹² Haramony Digal, a lady Priest of Church of North India, at Baliguda. Interviewed on 08/05/2018.

⁶⁹³ Chandrakant Nayak and Suryakant Nayak from G. Udayagiri. Interviewed on 10/04/2018 at Bishop’s College.

Christians and concluded that Swami must have been killed by the Christians. They telecasted the angry speech of the RSS leaders against the Christians and stimulated violence all over Odisha against the Christians, particularly in Kandhamal.⁶⁹⁴ *Samaj*, the leading Odiya daily newspaper, reported that even though Maoists were responsible for the murder, the Christians must have been involved in it by providing economical supports to them.⁶⁹⁵ The views of the Shankaracharya of Puri, Pravin Togadia, and Ashok Singhal the national leaders of the VHP, attacking and demonising the Christians was reported on the first page.⁶⁹⁶ The matter that was reported by the local press during the time of the riots was as follows: “Christian missionaries killed Lakshmanananda, conversion is the root cause of the problem, Lakshmanananda was the saviour of the tribals, adivasis are Hindus and conversion to Christianity is polluting, Panas are outsiders and they have grabbed the land of the Konds, Christians, the converted Panas have fraudulently grabbed the benefits given by the law to the tribals, re-conversion is an essential activity”.⁶⁹⁷ The press report failed to publish the atrocities of the Sangh Parivar during the time of the funeral procession of Lakshmanananda.

In the context of Kandhamal riots, a major role was played by the mass media interpreting the events in favour of the Sangh Parivar. The news telecasted in all the three prominent TV channels from Odisha, namely, ETV, OTV and Doordarshan, and the reports published in Oriya daily newspapers clearly showed that the true factors that caused the violence had not been properly analysed. Hindus of high caste supporting the Sangh Parivar controlled most part of the local media in the state; hence, their reports were mostly in favour of the Sangh Parivar. The Christians were accused of playing a major role in the conversion of Hindu people into Christianity. Even though some of the journalists reported the role the Parivar played in the riots, they in some way embroiled the minority Christian people into it. The alleged attack on Swami Lakshmanananda on 23 December 2007 was disgustingly hyperbolised in the media. The media failed to play its fair role in unearthing the confederacy of communalism to stop the violence.⁶⁹⁸

⁶⁹⁴ Interview with Soroj Mallick, a Hindu leader of Kui Samaj and Fr, Cassian Pradhan on 03/11/2016. Appendix 4.

⁶⁹⁵ Op. cit., A Report by PUCL, 16. Cf. Kedar Mishra, “Kandhamal riot, the fourth column and the tragedy of democracy,” *Anupam Bharat* (Odiya Daily), Bhubaneswar, 23/08/2009.

⁶⁹⁶ Op. cit., Saumya Uma, *Kandhamal: The Law Mus...*, 58.

⁶⁹⁷ Op. cit., *From Kandhamal to Karavali...*, p. 33.

⁶⁹⁸ Mrinal Chatterjee, “Oriya language press: status, problems and prospects,” Presented at the University of Pune in Feb. 2007. Unpublished.

Most of the media contradicted the thesis of a Maoist's involvement and accused the Christian minority without any concrete proof for the murder of Swami Lakshmanananda. The media papered over the organised role of the Sangh Parivar in the violence in Kandhamal by projecting the baseless allegation of religious conversion and accusing the Christian minorities. The forced reconversions by the Sangh Parivar as part of the violence were not remarked by the media. Though the Maoists⁶⁹⁹ claimed responsibility for distributing pamphlets which said that they had killed Swami Lakshmanananda, the media ignored it. Instead, they broadcasted in detail the version of Hindu fundamentalists and the demand of the Sangh Parivar.⁷⁰⁰

Opinions of the intellectuals and experts in the field were not brought into light on the riot. The opinions of the victims were never revealed. The journalists did not bother to cover the distressing story of those victimised in the violent events. The local media was used by the Sangh Parivar to prevaricate that the causes of the riots were caste based and not religion based in nature. They did not take the opinions of all sectors of the society during the time of continuous violence or after that. Most of the journalists did not visit the affected regions. Instead of conforming to the ethical standards of journalism, most of their reports were prepared under the pressure of political coercion. Majority of the dailies replicated the stand of the Sangh Parivar, and their tendency was to get political gains rather than keeping the ethical principles of journalism.⁷⁰¹

The media was used effectively to draw a divisive line between the communities of the Panas and Konds. By making certain false reports, they attempted to create a wrong notion that the violence in Kandhamal was based on caste and not on religion. Most of the journalists from Kandhamal District did not belong to the native communities; they belonged to other districts and settled in Kandhamal by buying lands from the tribals.⁷⁰² Majority of the Oriya media were not speaking about the villagers who returned to their native villages. The pictures depicted in the newspapers showed the cruelty of violence, but they failed to portray the actual situation of the relief camps where the victims stayed for longer period. There was no space given to the voice of the victims.⁷⁰³

⁶⁹⁹ Chapter 5.5.3

⁷⁰⁰ Op. cit., Kedar Mishra, "Kandhamal riot...", 23/08/2009.

⁷⁰¹ Op. cit., Saumya Uma, *Kandhamal: The Law Must...*, 58.

⁷⁰² Op. cit., *From Kandhamal to Karavali...*, p. 33.

⁷⁰³ Op. cit., Mrinal Chatterjee, Unpublished.

Analysis of the reportage of the daily newspapers *Samaj*, *Sambad* and the *Dharitri* shows that very little was reported about the violence by the main Odiya press, but the justifications given by the Hindu fundamentalists and their accusations against Christians were extensively covered by the press. They depicted the rampaging violent mobs as spontaneous reactions of the Hindus. The perspectives of Ashok Singhal, Praveen Togadia, Shankaracharya of Puri, and other VHP leaders attacking as well as demonising Christians were usually reported on the first pages. But the sexual assault on Sister Meena Lalita at K. Nuagaon was not reported until a journalist of *The Hindu* from outside the state took the initiative of publishing the incident.⁷⁰⁴

The local press repeatedly published certain areas of their concern such as how the killing of Swami Lakshmanananda was not done by the Maoists but by Christian missionaries, that conversion was the root cause of the problem, that Lakshmanananda was the protector of the tribals, that tribals were Hindus by origin and their conversion to Christianity polluted them, that the Panas were intruders and they had taken the resources of the Konds, that Pana Christians were fraudulently enjoying the benefits given to the tribals by the government, that tribals were reduced to minority in their own land because of the conversion, that Christian leaders were hyperbolising the happenings to spoil the image of Odisha in the US and in Europe and that conversion to Hinduism was a necessary movement.⁷⁰⁵ The KFPJ had regularly interacted with many national and international research organisations to bring out the reality of Kandhamal situations, and this helped to facilitate the reports of different research groups and official reports. Many local and national media had published reports.⁷⁰⁶

8.11 Death anniversary of Swami Lakshmanananda

The first death anniversary of Swami Lakshmanananda was commemorated on 23 August 2009. It was observed on Janmashtami – the birthday of Lord Sri Krishna as per Hindu calendar. The Sangh Parivar demanded the arrest of the conspirators and killers of Lakshmanananda before the state assembly election. They failed to achieve political mileage out of the flashing of the pictures of the blood-splattered dead body of Lakshmanananda in the elections. Though the Sangh Parivar did not make elaborate

⁷⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁶ Hemant Naik co-convenor of KFPJ from G. Udayagiri. Collected unpublished data from his office register on 05/05/2018.

arrangements for the death anniversary of Lakshmanananda, the media of Odisha was enthusiastic and the representatives of newspapers and TV channels encamped themselves at Kandhamal much earlier. Every bit of the ceremony was directly telecasted. But the media had no word of sympathy for the riot victims of Kandhamal. While 23 August 2008 was the day to recall the death of Lakshmanananda, it also marked the beginning of the religious violence in Kandhamal which resulted in the deaths and sufferings of many Christians. But the media was focused blaming Christians as the killers and conspirators of Lakshmanananda. The hardship and suffering of the people were totally ignored by the media. Thousands of leaflets had been distributed by the Sangh Parivar all across the state with the message that Christians should be wiped out. This was also echoed by the Sangh Parivar leaders in the meetings. Unfortunately, the media offered more space for these statements.⁷⁰⁷

8.12 Theories for the Kandhamal violence

Many theories emerged out of the Kandhamal violence, particularly in the years 2007 and 2008. The people who involved directly or indirectly in the communal violence had developed different theories in order to justify their act. The Hindu leaders believed that the increase of the Christian population by the allurements of Christian missionaries led to the riot. Political leaders believed that it was an ethnic and economic problem between two communities. The Sangh Parivar believed that Swami Lakshmanananda was killed by Christians, so the riot was a spontaneous reaction of his followers. In order to strengthen their position, they developed theories by various means.

8.12.1 Theory of conversion

According to Hindu leaders of Odisha, the number of Christians was rapidly increasing in Kandhamal with the rampant and forced conversion. Christian NGOs and churches were involved in conversion by offering money and distributing church-related paraphernalia to beguile communities.⁷⁰⁸ The VHP data claimed that there were 927 churches in Kandhamal. According to the 1991 and 2001 census, there was a substantial upsurge of Christian population in Kandhamal, from 8.7% to 18.2%.⁷⁰⁹ The RSS leaders alleged that Christian missionaries received money from abroad to construct

⁷⁰⁷ Op. cit., Kedar Mishra, "Kandhamal riot...", 15.

⁷⁰⁸ Op. cit., JPDC, 31.

⁷⁰⁹ Op. cit., Saumya Uma, *Kandhamal: The Law Must...*, 53.

churches, whereas temples were constrained for funds to get regular maintenance.⁷¹⁰ This increasing number and activities of Christians triggered the *Hindutva* forces against the Christians. The Sangh Parivar charged that Christian conversion in Kandhamal led to a spontaneous outburst from Hindus.

8.12.2 Theory of ethnic conflict

The factors that led to the violence were an occupation of tribal lands and the sharing of other government benefits by Dalits (Panas). The Odisha government passed the Orissa Scheduled Areas Transfer of Immovable Property Regulation Act 1956 in order to protect the tribal land. Kandhamal was a hilly area which came under the Property Regulation Act 1956, but different people groups moved to Kandhamal from the plains and occupied the land by various means. In 2002, the Odisha government directed the local administration to find out the legality of all land transfers from tribal to non-tribal. This order created an understanding that the Dalit Panas grabbed the land from the tribal Konds which created the tension between these two communities. Later, it became a real cause for violence.⁷¹¹

The tribals and Dalits have been given different status, namely ST and SC, respectively, by the government in order to get the privileges for self-betterment. The government benefits are obtainable depending on the social status of the person. Since the independence of the country, the designations of ST and SC had created controversies over the social status of the Konds and Panas in Kandhamal. Further in 1950, the definition of SCs in the Constitutional Order complicated the identification of the Panas. If a person belonging to the SC category converted to Islam or Christianity, he/she would lose his/her SC status. On the other hand, tribals do not lose their reservations. The allegation was that Christian Panas were availing SC benefits by using fake caste certificates which affected the benefits meant for tribals. So, the tribal Konds attacked the Dalit Panas.⁷¹²

⁷¹⁰ Op. cit., Angana P. Chatterji, *Violent Gods...*, 249.

⁷¹¹ Op. cit., A Report by PUCL..., 22.

⁷¹² Chad M Bauman and Richard Fox Young, eds. *Constructing Indian Christianities: Culture, Conversion and Caste* (New Delhi: Routledge India, 2014), 192, Cf. Op. cit., Saumy Uma, *Kandhamal: The Law Must...*, 56.

8.12.3 Theory of conspiracy

Swami Lakshmanananda, the Hindu leader, was working among the Konds from 1969. He established schools and health centres in various places in Kandhamal in order to prevent the Konds from converting to Christianity. He was trying to replace the developmental activities of Christian missionaries by his own initiatives. He was also converting the Christians to Hinduism and opposed cow slaughter.⁷¹³ So, the Sangh Parivar concluded that the Christians secretly planned and killed Swami. On 5 October 2008, the Maoist leader admitted their role in the killing of Swami on media. But the very next day the Hindu Jagaran Samukhya declared in the press conference that Swami's assassination was a pre-planned conspiracy executed by the church. They produced the original minute book of the Catholic Parish Council of Betticola Church as evidence, where the entire conspiracy seemed to be hatched and produced. Later, this allegation was proved to be forged.⁷¹⁴

Though there was a particular reason for violence in this period, the Hindu fundamentalists took advantage of the situation and executed their agenda. Anti-Christian slogans, reconversion, attack on churches and Christian organisations were the evidence for the well-planned Sangh Parivar activities in Kandhamal.

8.13 Conclusion

The history of the Kandhamal violence since 1980 was very much linked with religious communalism. Though there were other factors like socio-political issues involved, the predominant cause for violence was the religious factor. The repeated anti-Christian activities of Swami Lakshmanananda with the support of the Sangh Parivar to implement their political agenda, created a divide among the people based on their religious affiliations. The Sangh Parivar succeeded by giving a new Hindu religious identity to the tribals as well as in projecting the Christians as adopting a foreign identity. This change of identity played the major role in fuelling the violence throughout the period.

The violence occurred mostly during the times of Christian festivals in order to disrupt the celebrations. Reconversion was part of the violence. If the Christians converted to Hinduism, they were allowed to stay in their respective places without any

⁷¹³ Op. cit., A Report by PUCL..., 53.

⁷¹⁴ Op. cit., Anto Akkara, *Kandhamal a Blot...*, 73.

disturbance, which was against the theory of ethnic conflict. Swami Lakshmanananda portrayed himself as a saviour of the tribals and the guardian of Hinduism in Kandhamal. The Sangh Parivar used his death as an opportunity to execute their plan of eradicating Christianity from Kandhamal. The BJP had raised its *Hindutva* politics on a national level, and their political power in Odisha helped the Sangh Parivar to get favour from the state administration, the police department and the media to escalate the violence and manipulate the truth.

CHAPTER NINE

THE RESPONSE OF KANDHAMAL CHRISTIANS TO RELIGIOUS COMMUNAL VIOLENCE

9.1 Introduction

The violence against Christians in India prompted them to respond in various ways. Initially, the problems were confined to particular villages, and they were locally dealt with police or Judiciary. Later, even petty problems flared up as communal issues. The victims responded according to the situation. In the early 1980s, the Christian minorities retaliated. Whenever there was a threat to their Christian identity, they migrated from their own lands. Some were forced to take a new identity as Hindus in order to save their lives. As a community, they tried to engage in interfaith dialogue. As Church and mission organisations, they worked out new strategies for their witness and mission. As Christian organisations, they fought for their legal and political rights. As Indian Christians, they appealed to international communities and human rights organisations. This chapter is mainly focused on the Kandhamal Christians' response to religious communal violence.

9.2 Immediate response

On 24 December 2007, some Christian youths were erecting a bamboo *pandal* at the entrance of the Bamunigaon village in Kandhamal with the permission of the police as part of their Christmas decoration. A group of Hindus objected to it and quarrelled with the Christian boys, which finally ended in physical violence. The police came and arrested a few from both the sides.⁷¹⁵ In the ensuing violence, the Hindus of Gadapur village, Brahmanigaon Block, attacked the church, shops and houses of Christian families. The tribal Christian mob retaliated in the same way by destroying the houses and shops of Hindus. The Hindus ran to the jungle for their lives and stayed hid there for two or three days.⁷¹⁶ On 26 August 2008, Barakhama village Christians were hiding in one place in order to face the situation together. When the mob found out the hiding place, they tried to attack them. One young Christian boy was shot dead. The Christians also retaliated by throwing some crude bombs. The mob returned without causing

⁷¹⁵ John Dayal, "Christmas mourning: the unofficial white," Op. cit., JPDC, 3.

⁷¹⁶ Dan Isaac, "What is behind Hindu-Christian violence?" Op. cit., JPDC, 89.

further damage to them.⁷¹⁷ Only in these three places, there was an evidence of resistance from the Christians; otherwise, on all occasions, Christians were passive victims of Kandhamal.

Kandhamal was a hilly forest place. Almost all villages were surrounded by jungles. When the riots took place in the years 2007 and 2008, the immediate response of the Christians was to save their lives. So, they rushed to the jungle and remained there for three or four days before they moved to the camps set by the government. They stayed in the jungle during the day, and they were given shelter in the Hindus' houses at night. Some fled to faraway places where they had their relatives. Some took their valuables along with them, while some buried them underground, and some handed over theirs to Hindu neighbours.⁷¹⁸

During these riots, the Sangh Parivar threatened the Christians to convert to Hinduism or they would be killed.⁷¹⁹ Therefore, some Christians converted out of fear and were declared as Hindus and were allowed to stay in their villages.⁷²⁰ In some cases, the Christians were asked to burn the Bible and urinate on it as a proof of their conversion. For instance, 13 Christian families from Sibapanga village were forced to convert to Hinduism, to discard the Bible and to urinate on it. There were also asked to destroy the fellow Christians' houses along with them. But after a few months, when the other Christians returned back to the village, all the 13 converted Christians families also returned to Christianity.⁷²¹ In some villages, the Christians were trooped into temples and village centres by armed mobs for reconversion ritual. They were forced to deny their faith and compelled to drink cow urine and dung mixture as part of the purification ceremony.⁷²² The reconversions took place by force with a threat to their lives. However, these converts did not remain in Hinduism. Once they moved out to the camps or return back to their villages, they practised their Christian faith.⁷²³

The government set up temporary camps in different localities to keep the victimised Christians. When the riot prolonged for months, the police forced the

⁷¹⁷ Karthik Nayak from Barakhama, Interviewed on 29/10/2016. Appendix 4.

⁷¹⁸ Karmila Nayak and Louisa Singh from Kanjamendi. Interviewed on 30/10/2016. Pushpanjali Panda from Beticola, Interviewed on 01/11/2016. Appendix 4.

⁷¹⁹ Op. cit., Anto Akkara, *Early Christians...*, 54.

⁷²⁰ Anacleta Nayak from Tiangia. Interviewed on 31/10/2016. Appendix 4.

⁷²¹ Francis Digal, Elias Digal and Zachraias Digal from Sibapanga village. Interviewed on 01/11/2016.

⁷²² Op. cit., Anto Akkara, *Kandhamal Craves...*, 130.

⁷²³ Anacleta Nayak from Tiangia. Interviewed on 31/10/2016 (Chapter 5.5.3).Appendix 4.

Christians who were living in their own houses to move out from their village and settle in the camps. The reason stated was that the police could not give 24 hours protection to the Christians in every village. So, the Christian families were compelled to stay in the camps for their protection.⁷²⁴

9.2.1 Legal approach

In the 1980s and 1990s, the disputes between Hindus and Christians in Kandhamal were dealt with the village committee or by the court. In 1983, the idol of Gramaya Devata, the god of Kattingia village was dislocated, which created tension between the Christians and the Hindus. The Hindus accused two young Christian boys and filed a case against them. A meeting was called, but it failed to settle the issue. The court declared that the two Christian boys were innocent. But the Hindu community members were not happy with the judgement.⁷²⁵ Later, the police refused to file cases against the Sangh Parivar because the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was part of the government from 1998.

During the time of continuous riots in 2007 and 2008, the Christians in Kandhamal first approached the police for their protection, justice and compensation, but the police failed to take any initiative to safeguard Christians. Most of the First Information Reports (FIR)⁷²⁶ against the attackers were registered without mentioning names. As such, no actions were taken on the complaints registered. The Christians were thus left with no other options but to approach the courts for legal remedy, when the police failed to perform their duties. The statistics maintained by the Odisha Forum for Social Action shows that 3232 complaints were lodged in various police stations, out of which 827 cases were registered, final charge sheet made in 512 cases, and a total number of accused that faced the trial was 4,181. By 2015, only 492 persons were convicted, whereas 3254 accused were acquitted and 11,000 persons got anticipatory bail.⁷²⁷

⁷²⁴ Amona Nayak from Tiangia village. Interviewed on 31/10/2016. Appendix 4.

⁷²⁵ Roman Bastray, "Roman Bastray Survived a Murderous attack in Kattingia in the 1988s, and Lives to tell his tale" Op. cit., JPDC, 190.

⁷²⁶ First Information Report. The information that is spelt out in the FIR is the basis for criminal prosecution. Crime investigation is often subverted by pliant police officials who dilute the charger and distort the facts when the FIR is registered. Faulty FIRs ensure acquittal of the accused on technicalities during the trial in the court.

⁷²⁷ Op. cit., Ajai Kumar Singh, *Kandhamal Images...*,4.

A 20-member delegation headed by Ms. Keshamati Pradhan, the founder of Kuidina Forum for Peace and Justice (KFPJ), and the victims of Kandhamal violence moved to New Delhi to file a case in Supreme Court. This was a proceeding of their appeal to Honourable High Court of Odisha for the safety of the violence victims of Kandhamal and also to get compensation for damages and loss of human lives, rehabilitation, proper relief and livelihood support with justice and peace restoration processes.⁷²⁸

9.2.2 Monuments to martyrs

Even in the midst of violence and agony, the victims' families would try to recover the bodies of their loved ones who were killed. However, during the riots in 2008, most of the dead bodies were taken by the police for post-mortem and for other legal processes and buried by the government officials because the relatives of the persons were not in a position to receive the bodies and bury them. In some cases, the dead bodies were buried by the local church, and tombs were erected as big as possible with big crosses on top with the detail inscriptions, invariably mentioning that he or she is a 'Martyr for Christ'. These tombs were erected in their own private places in full public view.⁷²⁹ From 2009 onwards, the Kandhamal Christians commemorate the 'Martyrs' every year by celebrating 'Martyrs Day' on 28 August. Special public rallies and processions are organised, and the martyrs are honoured by conducting special masses and offering flowers to their tomb on that day.⁷³⁰

The Catholic Church in Tiangia built a simple yellow monument with a cross – a memorial with the names of the seven men from the village who died in the 2008 violence.⁷³¹

⁷²⁸ Hemant Naik, Unpublished records from the office of the KFPJ, G. Udayagiri.

⁷²⁹ Pratap Digal from Tiangia. Interviewed on 05/04/2018.

⁷³⁰ Haromoni Digal, a lady priest of Church of North India from Balliguda. Interviewed on 30/10/2016.

⁷³¹ Pratap Digal from Tiangia. Interviewed on 05/04/2018.

9.2.2.1 A picture of the monument pillar of the martyrs



The yellow monument with a cross – a memorial for the seven men from Tiangia village who died in the 2008 violence with inscription of the names Parikhta Nayak, Bernard Digal, Trinath Digal, Dibyasing Digal, Dinabandhu Pradhan and Bikram

9.2.2.2 A picture of the tomb of a martyr



9.3 Peace process organised by Christian NGOs

The KFPJ, a local people's initiative taken by the women activist of Kandhamal with the aim to restore peace and justice, had been involved in peace-building processes since the 2007 Kandhamal violence. Ms. Keshamati Pradhan was the founder and convenor of the Forum. Her son Mr. Hemant Naik became a co-convenor, and Mr. Isaac Digal was the coordinator of the Forum. The KFPJ was established at G. Udayagiri, Kandhamal District in 2007. Leaders from both the Kond and Pana communities worked together through the Forum for justice and peace in Kandhamal after the December 2007 communal riots.⁷³² The KFPJ activists, accompanied by other supporters, went to the villages and visited the victims of the 2007 riots and extended possible relief. They helped the victims to file police cases and pressurised the local administration to take the necessary actions against the perpetrators. They also held mass rallies and arranged public meetings to build the confidence of the victims.⁷³³

The first rally and public meeting by KFPJ were organised on 26 April 2008 at G. Udayagiri town in Kandhamal. About 12,000 people from different communities took part and expressed their collective interest to fight for justice and peace. The community leaders from different villages of Kandhamal attended the public meeting and participated in the rally carrying placards and shouting slogans. A memorandum was submitted to the Chief Minister of the State through the Tahsildar. Political leaders from different parties participated in the event and condemned the atrocities of the communal forces and urged for unity and solidarity to bring peace in Kandhamal.⁷³⁴

On 7 May 2008, at Tikabali, the local leaders organised a rally and a public meeting. About 15,000 people, mostly advocates, community leaders, student leaders, and women from different *panchayats* of Tikabali Block as well as from adjacent blocks participated. A memorandum was sent to the Chief Minister after the mass rally and public meeting demanding his immediate intervention.⁷³⁵

Another public meeting was organised at Balliguda on 10 May 2008. About 18,000 people participated in the rally and submitted a memorandum to the Sub-collector, Balliguda, to take proper action for the protection of the religious minorities.

⁷³² Hemant Naik, Unpublished records from the office of the KFPJ, G. Udayagiri.

⁷³³ Ibid.

⁷³⁴ Ibid.

⁷³⁵ Ibid.

Political leaders and journalists along with other community leaders condemned the evil forces and appealed to the public to have a harmonious living and not to give any chance to troublemakers again.⁷³⁶

There was another public meeting organised at Daringbadi on 9 June 2008. Around 20,000 people from various communities and their leaders, representatives from public groups and different religious communities took part in the rally and marched around with placards and shouting slogans in the streets of Daringbadi town to promote justice and peace. A memorandum was submitted to the Block Development Officer (BDO) to be forwarded to the Chief Minister, necessitating initiatives to take necessary actions against the perpetrators and protection for the affected communities. They appealed to the public to be careful about the communal forces and retrieve peace and harmony in Kandhamal.⁷³⁷

On 19 June 2008, a public gathering and a rally were arranged at Raikia. A total of approximately 10,000 people from different communities including tribal and Dalit leaders, women, and government officials participated in the programme. They marched around Raikia town carrying placards and shouting slogans against the communal forces. The tribal and Dalit leaders of different blocks had addressed the crowd. A memorandum was forwarded to the Chief Minister of the State through BDO, Raikia, requesting prompt actions against the troublemakers.⁷³⁸ “Hemant Naik, Convenor of KFPJ, presided over the protest rallies. These programmes were also jointly organised by Ms. Keshamati Pradhan, Isaac Digal, Fr. Leo Paarichha, Debendra Nayak, Sumabati Pradhan, Radhakant Singh, Amiya Nayak, Bidyadhar Mallick, Madan Nayak, Moheet Naik, etc.”⁷³⁹

Ms. Teesta Setalvad, a prominent human rights activist along with a group of delegates met and submitted memorandums to the honourable members of United Nations Organisations, New Delhi; National Election Commission; members of the National Minority Commission; and National Human Rights Commission on 23 March 2009. They also met leaders of different political parties in Delhi, such as Mr. Sitaram Yechury and Mr. Prakash Karat of the Communist Party of India (Maoist) and also Mr.

⁷³⁶ Ibid.

⁷³⁷ Ibid.

⁷³⁸ Ibid.

⁷³⁹ Ibid. Cf. <http://www.kandhamal.net/kandhmal/Default.aspx>. Accessed on 08/12/2018.

Veerapa Moily, a Congress leader, as well as other leading journalists, to bring out the truth in relation to the communal violence and to assess the present condition of Kandhamal.⁷⁴⁰

The responsible officials who were supposed to maintain law and order did not seem to have interest to control the crimes and the officials responsible for providing relief and rehabilitation failed to perform their duties the right way. Such a circumstance made the way easier for the reprobates to commit more felonious activities which further exacerbated the situation. The Forum approached the Odisha Human Rights Commission to conduct a probe against the irresponsible officers and filed a complaint (case no. 472/2009 dated 28 March 2009). A large number of victims were living in pathetic conditions and staying away from Kandhamal.⁷⁴¹ For this reason, the Forum submitted their request to postpone the assembly elections which was scheduled on 16 April 2009 to Ms. Alaka Panda, Election Commissioner of Odisha, at Bhubaneswar on 7 April 2009. The KFPJ delegates met His Excellency Governor of Odisha Sri. Muralidhar Chandrakant Bhandare on 3 June 2009 and submitted a memorandum demanding his intervention in matters related to the Kandhamal issue. The Governor recognised the delegates and gave directions to the officials (vide letter no. 2879) to take necessary action.⁷⁴²

On 12 June 2009, a joint *dharna* (protest) was organised by the Forum in cooperation with many political parties. As part of it, a public meeting and a mass rally took place in front of the Odisha Legislative Assembly while the Assembly session was in progress. The leaders of various political parties joined the rally and submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister. They objurgated the violence in Kandhamal and also called for necessary action against the perpetrators.⁷⁴³

A training programme was organised for the youth at Daringbadi, Kandhamal from 5 to 6 July 2009 to sensitise them on conflict resolution and peacebuilding process. On 15 July 2009, a mass rally, protest (*dharna*) and a public meeting were arranged in front of the office of the District Magistrate of Kandhamal demanding an inclusive, transparent, participatory peace process, and a memorandum was submitted. The

⁷⁴⁰ Hemant Naik, Unpublished records from the office of the KFPJ, G. Udayagiri.

⁷⁴¹ Ibid.

⁷⁴² Ibid.

⁷⁴³ Ibid.

demand was the legal action against the culprits. They also condemned the attacks which were happening continuously. There were threats to the complainants and witnesses to prevent them from giving evidence. Most of the culprits were declared not guilty by the Fast Track Court. These issues were addressed in the rally.⁷⁴⁴

Seminars and workshops were conducted in order to create awareness about the social conflict. In order to promote justice and peace they organised training and capacity-building programmes with the help of experts from different places. For example, on 17 October 2009, a programme was conducted in Gopalpur Vincent Ekka, an activist from New Delhi came as a resource person.⁷⁴⁵

The delegates of the KFPJ met the Odisha State Health Minister Prasanna Acharya on 24 October 2009 and discussed the implementation of the National Rural Health Mission in Kandhamal. They also participated in a high-level meeting with the Health Secretary Anu Garg and other officials and discussed on various health-related issues of the people who were staying in camps in Kandhamal.⁷⁴⁶

On 8 November 2009, a group of KFPJ members met Rudramadhav Roy, the Member of Parliament of Kandhamal, under the leadership of Keshamati Pradhan, and explained him the situation in Kandhamal. On the same day, the team also attended the conference organised by All India Student Federation (AISF) and National Alliance of Women's Organisations (NAWO). They discussed with John Nayak, the retired Deputy Inspector General of Police at YMCA, Bhubaneswar, about the situation in Kandhamal.⁷⁴⁷

On 9 November 2009, a delegation of KFPJ met Sri. Muralidhar Chandrakant Bhandare, His Excellency Governor of Odisha, again and submitted a memorandum demanding immediate intervention of His Excellency on communal violence in Kandhamal and put forth nine demands in relation to protection of the victims, proper assessment of the loss of life and property, adequate relief and rehabilitation of the affected people, identify the displaced and make arrangements to resettle them

⁷⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁷ Ibid.

back home from the displaced places, legal support to the victims and also severe action against the criminals involved in the attacks.⁷⁴⁸

On 10 November 2009, a team of KFPJ met Pramila Mallick, the Minister of Women and Child Welfare of Odisha State and also the chairperson of District Planning Board of Kandhamal, and discussed on various issues related to development. The issue of non-inclusion of Scheduled Tribe (ST) and Scheduled Caste (SC) and women rose in the development project of Kandhamal and demanded an inclusive process. They insisted that representation from ST, SC, women and minorities should attend the development committees of the district. There must be a review and re-examination of government and non-governmental aid and the rehabilitation activities relating to Kandhamal violence.

On 29 November 2009, a district-level meeting was planned to be conducted in G. Udayagiri. The main objective of the meeting was to bring peace and justice in the Kandhamal region. The prominent indigenous people's leaders participated in the meeting. They advocated for the support of traditions and language of the people of Kandhamal which used to bind communities together for peaceful coexistence. They decided to resist the evil forces of external disruptive powers to bring justice and peace in Kandhamal.⁷⁴⁹

The Phulbani Action group and the KFPJ jointly organised a seminar on 10 December 2009 at G. Udayagiri on the occasion of International Human Rights Day on the topic: 'Human Rights Principles and the Process restoration of peace and justice in Kandhamal'. There was a mass rally after the seminar displaying placards supporting peace and necessitating prompt action against the culprits and the persons who promoted hate campaign. The Dalit and tribal leaders, writers and journalists, renowned scholars, senior retired government officers and also representatives from advocates and media were attended the programme.⁷⁵⁰

On 1 February 2010, about 25 members of KFPJ met the Governor of Odisha and demanded for a transparent and inclusive process of taking action against the main criminals and the officials who neglected their duties during the time of riots to bring

⁷⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁰ Rajeev Dhavan "Policing faith India's anti-conversion legislation: lasting damage and endless repercussions," http://www.kandhamal.net/DownloadMat/Dossier_on_Kandhamal.pdf. p. 157. Accessed on 09/05/2018

justice to the victims. They also met Janardan Pati, State Chief of Communist Party of India (Maoist), Orissa Chapter on 2 February 2010. He extended his full support to the campaign of KFPJ.⁷⁵¹

On 26 July 2010, Ms. Keshamati Pradhan, the convenor of KFPJ, called for a mass protest and a public meeting in front of the Odisha Assembly. She demanded the government to take appropriate actions and speed up the peace- building processes and also to provide sufficient relief and rehabilitation aids to all the people who were affected by the violence. Many state tribal leaders firmly commented on the discriminatory mind set of the people in power against the issues of tribals and Dalits. On the same day, a large delegation of the Forum also met the Governor of Odisha and the Chief Minister of Odisha, and a memorandum submitted with specific suggestions in order to speed up the process of justice system and the development work.⁷⁵²

9.3.1 The Association of Victims of Communal Violence in Kandhamal

The Association of Victims of Communal Violence in Kandhamal (*Sampradayik Hinsa Prapadita Sangathana*) was formed in Phulbani, the headquarters of Kandhamal District, after a series of meetings in which the Christian leaders, human rights and civil society activists participated. On 7 December 2009, a meeting was presided over by Archbishop Raphael Cheenath at Berhampur, in which other bishops and church leaders, human rights activist, senior lawyers and the All India Christian Council (AICC) and a group of priests and pastors, community leaders and activists officially endorsed the formation of the Association.⁷⁵³

Two Fast Track Courts⁷⁵⁴ were set up on 1 March 2009 to deal with the violent situation in Kandhamal.⁷⁵⁵ People had lost their confidence on the Fast Track Courts because they included alleged murderers, one of them a BJP legislator Manoj Pradhan,

⁷⁵¹ Ibid.

⁷⁵² Op. cit., Hemant Naik, Unpublished records.

⁷⁵³ John Dayal, "Kandamal victims: Action for reconciliation," *The Milli Gazette*, Jan. 2010, p. 1. Cf. <http://www.milligazette.com/news/5222-kandamal-victims-action-for-reconciliation>. Accessed on 02/10/2018.

⁷⁵⁴ "The Orissa government set up two Fast Track Courts to try the cases relating to the orchestrated anti-Christian violence in Kandhamal, following criticism of the failure of the state government to protect the hounded Christians. Of the 3232 complaints that were filed by the Christians in connection with the widespread violence, only 828 cases were registered by the police. The two Fast Track Courts had given verdicts in 245 cases by August 2012 with 452 accused convicted in 73 cases, while 2433 accused had been acquitted in 172 cases." Op. cit., Anto Akkara, *Early Christians...*, 263.

⁷⁵⁵ Op. cit., Anto Akkara, *Who Killed Swami...*, 89.

who was involved in several cases. His presence in the court created fear among the eyewitnesses who were too scared to depose against the culprits. In order to restore public confidence and to ensure the victims and witnesses protection the Association worked in close association with the clergy and civil society activists. They also helped in the process of reconciliation and resettling the victims in their own villages without any discrimination. Nevertheless, the Association expressed its deep distrust in the justice delivery system because the Fast Track Courts were trying to complete their task by disposing of the cases without any seriousness. For instance, people who involved in murder cases were acquitted, and the culprits were very rarely convicted.⁷⁵⁶

The Association also pressed the government through various meetings to provide adequate security for the people. The sense of insecurity among the witnesses was leading to a gross miscarriage of justice in the two Fast Track Courts. For this reason, many victims filed criminal cases against the culprits in the Orissa High Court separately. The witnesses were threatened and coerced by the murderers and arsonists who were facing the trial courts. The presence of the Sangh Parivar activists, who were involved in the violence in the court premises, created fear among the witnesses who often ended up renegeing in the court.⁷⁵⁷ The two special courts were dealing with 327 cases and had delivered verdicts for 257 cases by the end of 2012. But the process of the judgement ended in March 2013. Finally, 477 accused were convicted in 75 cases, 2704 accused acquitted in 182 cases, and all the accused in 169 cases were acquitted.⁷⁵⁸ As the compensation received for the damaged houses were meagre, the Association appealed to the government for full compensation to the victims. The Association also insisted that the damaged churches and non-governmental organisations' (NGOs) buildings should be compensated. They urged the government to come up with schemes for the violence-affected families and execute them systematically, so that the victims may settle and live with dignity.⁷⁵⁹

The Association proposed special projects for the women victims in Kandhamal. They also alarm the government to be cautious about the possibility of human

⁷⁵⁶ Op. cit., John Dayal, "Kandamal victims...", p. 5. Cf. <http://www.milligazette.com/news/5222-kandamal-victims-action-for-reconciliation>. Accessed on 02/10/2018.

⁷⁵⁷ Ibid., 10.

⁷⁵⁸ Op. cit., Anto Akkara, *Who Killed Swami...*, 89.

⁷⁵⁹ Ibid.

trafficking. They also requested the officials to work genuinely while allotting land for homes to the people who fell into the trap of the Forest Act and lost their land. They advocated that the people who lost their homes had to be given land to build houses. The Association also appealed to the government to act strongly against the hate campaign.⁷⁶⁰

9.3.2 The Kandhamal Christian *Jan Kalyan Samaj*

The Kandhamal Christian *Jan Kalyan Samaj* (Kandhamal Christian People's Welfare Society) was formed in 2007 to protect the interest of Christians in the context of communal violence. Advocate Manas Ranjan Singh was the General Secretary of the *Samaj*.⁷⁶¹ It had objected and cautioned the police and the local administration about the entry of the VHP leader Togadia into the district during the Swami Lakshmanananda's burial procession on 24 and 25 August 2008. They also wrote to the Odisha Chief Minister, the Prime Minister and the President of India. Togadia was famous for his inflammatory speech which could aggravate the communal riots. In spite of the *Samaj*'s request, the state administration permitted him and gave him protection to reach Kandhamal. Just as expected, his presence and speech aggravated the situation.⁷⁶²

9.4 Resettling

The immediate response to the violence by the Christians in Kandhamal was to run away from the site to save their lives. Majority of the victims stayed in the forest or jungle for some days before they moved on to the refugee camps.⁷⁶³ There was a peace committee formed in every village with the help of local government officers. These committees consisted of representatives from both the religious communities and led by the government officials. Often, the Hindu members of the local village peace committee insisted that the Christians be converted to Hinduism in order to be allowed to resettle in their respective villages.⁷⁶⁴ For example, Christians from Dodingia and Betticola villages were not allowed to resettle in their villages. In such situations where

⁷⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁶¹ Ibid., 109.

⁷⁶² Staff Reporter, "Ban Togadia's entry, Kandhamal Christians urge government," *The Hindu*, Feb. 26, 2015. <https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-otherstates/ban-togadias-entry-kandhamal-christians-urge-government/article6934575.ece>. Accessed on 02/09/2018.

⁷⁶³ Op. cit., Anto Akkara, *Early Christians...*, 98.

⁷⁶⁴ Ibid., 134.

the government officials were prevented from resettling the Christians, the government allotted places like Nandagiri and Ambethkar Nagar for them to resettle, in spite of opposition from other people.⁷⁶⁵

In other places, like Betticola village, where Christians were not permitted to resettle as Christians in their own land, the government allotted them land for their resettlement and gave rupees 50,000 per family to build their houses. The Believers' Church from Kerala State came forward to build houses for them. There are 67 houses in this new village, of which 50 families are from Betticola village. This new colony is called Nandagiri. Both Roman Catholic and Believers' Churches have their respective places of worship in the new village.⁷⁶⁶

The Christians of Dodingia village returned after a year of staying in the camp and saw that their houses were burned down, and their agricultural land confiscated by others. They all stayed together in one place, under police protection for one year. Several peace talks were initiated by officials, but there was no positive progress. The Hindus put a lot of restrictions on the Christians as well as to their own people. Finally, the Christians requested the sub-collector to give them land for settlement outside the village. Considering the situation, the sub-collector agreed and allotted a place for 27 houses to be built. They got compensation of Rs. 50,000 per family from the government. With that money and the help of Barnabas Funds, an NGO from Delhi, these Christians built their own houses in the new place and named it Ambedkar Nagar. The government registered the land in their names and gave electricity connections. Christian NGOs helped them to have two bore wells and one tube well. Churches in the village were rebuilt with the help of outside Christians. In this new village, they have a house church for their worship.⁷⁶⁷ A large number of Christians in Kandhamal who were not permitted to resettle in their own villages migrated permanently to urban areas of Odisha or other states where their Christian identity was not questioned.

⁷⁶⁵ Ibid., 136. Cf. Subash Kumar Digal and Sunil Nayak from Ambethkar Nagar. Krisanth Mullick from Nandagiri. Interviewed on 01/11/2016. Appendix 4.

⁷⁶⁶ Krisanth Mullick from Betticola village. Interviewed on 01/11/2016. Appendix 4. Cf. Op. cit., Anto Akkara, *Early Christians...*, 136.

⁷⁶⁷ Subash Kumar and Sunil Nayak from Dodingia village. Interviewed on 01/11/2016.

9.5 Rebuilding churches

Desecrating and demolishing the church buildings were the main agenda of the Sangh Parivar during the riots in Kandhamal. About 150 churches were fully or partially destroyed. From 2009 onwards, the Christians in Kandhamal began to resettle in their respective villages. Once settled, they began to renovate or build new churches. The Roman Catholic Church buildings were rebuilt by their respective dioceses. All the partially damaged church buildings were renovated, while the fully damaged church buildings were abandoned and new church buildings were built on the same premises.⁷⁶⁸ Similarly, the churches under Phulbani Diocese, a unit of Church of North India (CNI), rebuilt all the damaged church buildings with the help of the various Christian mission agencies and churches from South India. Mission agencies like Vishvawani, World Vision, Indian Missionary Society, Friends Missionary Prayer Band and churches like Church of South India, Believers' Church, and other independent believers supported financially and materially to rebuild the church buildings. Interestingly, the new church buildings are much bigger and stronger than the older, and the towers are taller than the old ones. Though the government refused to give compensation for the church buildings, it gave permission to rebuild the churches without any hesitancy, and there was no objection from the local people.⁷⁶⁹

For example, during the riots in 2008, four churches belonging to the CNI were destroyed in four villages under the Balliguda Block. They were rebuilt with the help and support of other Christians from South India. The new church buildings in Sendringa, Majamaha, Judabadi and Terabadi villages started in the year 2010 and completed by 2013. The new church buildings in Kandhamal stand there as a bold faith affirmation of the Christian community.⁷⁷⁰

9.6 Interfaith engagement

From the 1980s, the Indian Christian theologians engaged themselves in the projects of theological indigenisation in order to create a better understanding of Christianity among the caste Hindus. After the Kandhamal riots, the Christians strengthen their interfaith engagements and made over their religious activities to make it more

⁷⁶⁸ Fr. Ratikant Ranjit, "Visualising the Future," *Silver Jubilee Souvenir of Most Rev. Raphael Cheenath, SDV as Archbishop of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar (1985–2010)* (Bhubaneswar: Diocese of Cuttack and Bhubaneswar, 2010), 65.

⁷⁶⁹ Bijay Kumar Nayak, Bishop of Phulbani Diocese (CNI) Interviewed on 30/10/2016.

⁷⁷⁰ Haromoni Dugal, a lady priest of Church of North India from Balliguda. Interviewed on 30/10/2016.

inclusive. The Christian NGOs like Jan Vikas began to appoint field staffs from people of other faiths in their projects. In the violence-affected village of Letingia in Kandhamal, a Christian agency funded the construction of a community prayer hall in which symbols of different religious traditions were displayed, and on the walls of which quotations from non-Christian leaders such as the Dalit rights activist B. R. Ambedkar were inscribed.⁷⁷¹ They also appointed grass-roots-level workers from other religious traditions which helped the people of other faiths to know the intension and work of the NGOs. In some villages, the government officials took initiatives to form a peace committee in which both the community representatives were present. These committees involved in organising the local festivals of all religious groups.⁷⁷²

There was an interfaith dialogue between top religious leaders⁷⁷³ of Hindus and Catholics held at Mumbai's Shanmukhananda Hall on 13 June 2009. They elaborately discussed the issue of conversions and the killings at Kandhamal in Orissa in the year 2008. The Vatican representative raised the question of why Christians were facing violence when India was supposed to be a secular nation.⁷⁷⁴

The Sankaracharya reportedly looked for a pledge that religious conversions would be terminated and referred to the assurances sought by Jewish rabbis from the Pope. The Sankaracharya said, "The meeting can be considered useful if the points agreed are faithfully followed. Unless the church reassures Hindus that it will not conduct itself in a manner that wounds Hindu sensibilities and follows up on those assurances, such inter-faith meetings, no matter how frequently held, will be futile and not serve any meaningful cause."⁷⁷⁵ Cardinal Gracias responded by saying, "Although conversion is a personal choice, I want to endorse that there will be no forced

⁷⁷¹ Allen D. Hertzke and Timothy Samuel Shah, eds. *Christianity and Freedom: Contemporary Perspectives*, Vol. 2 (London: Cambridge Press, 2016), 237.

⁷⁷² Kumuda Kumar Nayak, Jana Vikas staff. Interviewed on 04/11/2016.

⁷⁷³ "The Hindu side was represented by the Sankaracharya (the head priest) of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham, Jayendra Saraswati, and Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Swami Chidananda Saraswati of Uttaranchal, Swami Vishveshwarananda Giri Maharaj of Mumbai, Swami Nihilleshwarananda of Vadodara, the Prajapita of Brahmakumaris from Rajasthan and Chaturvedi Swami of Chennai. The Christian side was represented by Mumbai Archbishop Cardinal Oswald Gracias, Cardinal Jean Louis Tauran, the Pope's representative, Archbishop Quintana of the Vatican Nunciature in Delhi, Cardinal Topno of Ranchi, Archbishop Gali Bali of Guntur, Archbishop Felix Machado of Nashik and Bishop Thomas Dabre of Pune." Linah Baliga, "Conversion Focus of inter-faith talks," Jan. 13, 2009. <https://www.dnaindia.com/mumbai/report-conversion-focus-of-inter-faith-talks-1264434>. Accessed on 06/09/2018.

⁷⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁵ Ibid.

conversions. It has no meaning and is considered invalid. The Catholic Church is totally against forced conversions. The Vatican documents are clear about that.”⁷⁷⁶

After a lot of conversations and discussions, it was declared that the two religious groups would work together, wherever possible, in social work and charity. The Sankaracharya noted that “very large amounts of money come into this country for churches and Christian groups, ostensibly for charity work. These funds should be used only for social causes like health and education. Similarly, Hindu temples and Hindus will share their resources.”⁷⁷⁷ He further expressed his wish for India to be a spiritual country: “We should take moral lessons from each religion and educate our children”. For which, Cardinal Gracias replied that “Our country is spiritual and we must continue to deepen the spirituality of our people. Moral lessons should be included in the school syllabus, to help make better human beings.”⁷⁷⁸

Cardinal Tauran, one of the representatives of the Catholic side, expressed that: “India is a cradle of many religions. What impresses me is that Indians are open-minded and tolerant of positive values. We know this inter-faith meeting will have a positive outcome. It gives an orientation and a beginning of something.”⁷⁷⁹ The Sankaracharya also stated that there should be no intervention of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) in the internal affairs of the country, especially in the attacks on Christians in Odisha and Gujarat. He further said, “We see the USCIRF as an intrusive mechanism of a foreign government to interfere in the internal affairs of this country. The USCIRF, which has been permitted to hold meetings with our people to ascertain religious freedom in our country, must no longer be permitted to enter this country on this intrusive mission. We will not allow external interference in our internal affairs.”⁷⁸⁰

⁷⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁰ Op. cit., Linah Baliga,

9.7 The new strategy of the church

Generally, the aid and benefits of the church were shared among Christians only. After the communal riots in Kandhamal, the humanitarian aids received from the churches from other parts of the country were shared among with all the villagers of Kandhamal, particularly the poor tribal Hindus.⁷⁸¹ Moreover, the churches were earlier following confrontational styles of evangelism by criticising other religious and cultural activities. They used megaphones and other amplification systems to condemn and criticise other faiths during their street preaching. After the riots, they introduced new methods of evangelism by evangelistic techniques that include ‘web evangelism’, ‘friendship evangelism’ and ‘care cell evangelism’, which emphasise utilising networks of friendship, family ties, and business networks and commerce. Respecting other religious traditions and cultures is learning for the Christians. They began to recognise certain values in other religious traditions. The religious leaders of all communities have respect for each other and respected.⁷⁸²

9.8 Political activism

Organisations like the Alliance Defending Freedom International helped the Indian Christians to fight vigorously for their legal and political rights after the 2008 violence in Kandhamal.⁷⁸³ The Christian organisations took initiatives to promote religious freedom in India by providing training to people working in the field of constitutional law and human rights as well as by providing legal training, support and representation for victims. Indian Christians have demonstrated their political rights through rallies and had protested by sporadically closing down their vast networks of highly regarded schools.⁷⁸⁴

⁷⁸¹ Bijay Kumar Nayak, Bishop of Phulbani Diocese (CNI) Interviewed on 30/10/2016.

⁷⁸² Op. cit., Allen D. Hertzke and Timothy Samuel Shah, 371.

⁷⁸³ “ADF International builds alliances and engages in legal advocacy to protect and promote religious freedom throughout Europe, Asia, the Americas, Africa and Oceania. We operate at institutions of strategic international importance. It also works alongside Member States at these organizations to protect the fundamental values they were founded to uphold. ADF International’s influence at these key institutions means that they are instrumental in shaping policy around the world. ADF International is accredited by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the European Parliament and Commission and the Organization of American States (OAS). Additionally, we enjoy participatory status with the EU’s Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and engage regularly with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).” <https://adfinternational.org>. Accessed on 13/03/2018.

⁷⁸⁴ Chad M. Bauman and James Ponniah, “Christian responses to discrimination and violence in India and Sri Lanka: avoidance, advocacy, and interfaith engagement,” *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, Vol. 15, No. 1, Spring 2017, 70.

Christians in India sought help from benevolent Hindus, from other religious minorities, and from the state opposition political parties. They urged the world Christians to advocate on their behalves with the Indian government. Now, they have shown their willingness to work with other religious communities related to political projects that involve people of multiple faiths. This change in the attitude of Christians has resulted in their solidarity with people of other faith who started to support their cause.⁷⁸⁵

A new development among the Christians since the 1990s is the formation of the United Christian Forum for Human Rights, which results in creating interdenominational networks and alliances with greater ecumenical spirit. These ecumenical networks have helped to strengthen Christian political unity and created a platform to voice their demands. For example, the Karnataka government released 500 million rupees in response to the demands of the Christian ecumenical alliance in Bangalore, for repairing the buildings damaged in the 2008 riots.⁷⁸⁶

In the meantime, other ecumenical groups like the lay-led AICC and the All India Catholic Union of the Intra-Catholic unions actively involved in politics. The AICC was established in 1999 after a series of anti-Christian violent events in the Dangs, Gujarat, and the killing of Graham Staines, an Australian missionary and his two sons in Odisha.⁷⁸⁷ Indian Christian leaders connected with various international Christian and human rights organisations⁷⁸⁸ to give pressure on the Indian government. They had presented the cases to international political organisations. Leaders like John Dayal, a Christian social lay activist of the AICC, and Ajay Singh, a Catholic Father from the Odisha Forum for Social Action, worked with the UN Special Rapporteur who visited Odisha and Karnataka in 2007–2008 after the riots.⁷⁸⁹

9.9 Anto Akkara's initiatives

Anto Akkara, a Christian journalist from Kerala, India, visited Kandhamal many times after the major riots of 2008. Akkara wrote the reason for his interest in writing about

⁷⁸⁵ Ibid., 71.

⁷⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁷ Ibid., 72.

⁷⁸⁸ The AICC had worked with the Dalit Freedom Network, Christian Solidarity Worldwide (UK), Release International (UK) and Stefanus Alliance International (Norway). Op. cit., Allen D. Hertzke and Timothy Samuel Shah, 241.

⁷⁸⁹ Ibid.

the Kandhamal riots as “My journalistic confrontation over unacknowledged murders with the deputy collector of Kandhamal at the Nuagam refugee camp on 2008 Christmas Eve got me sucked into the Kandhamal crusade. The deputy collector Dr. Vineel Krishna brazenly dismissed the unacknowledged murders as ‘cooked up stories’ for the purpose compensations. That provoked me to write *Kandhamal – a blot on Indian Secularism* released in April 2009, after half a dozen trips to the jungle district of Kandhamal over 200–350 km south-west of Odisha’s capital Bhubaneswar.”⁷⁹⁰ After seeing the conditions of the victims of violence in Kandhamal, he decided to help the victims to get justice and to expose the reality of Kandhamal to the whole nation as well as to the world by his writings and publications. When he released his first book in April 2009 at Bangalore, it was widely reported in the media.⁷⁹¹ The Odisha government conceded four unaccounted murders that had been highlighted in the book with an affidavit in the Supreme Court, New Delhi. The book also exposed that the bloodshed in Kandhamal was not the spontaneous Hindu reaction to the Swami’s murder; rather, it was meticulously planned and executed conspiracy with the murder carried out on *Janmashtami*⁷⁹² night to trigger collateral damage.⁷⁹³

Akkara presented his second book in relation to Kandhamal violence in October 2009, titled ‘*Shining Faith in Kandhamal*’ at the Mission Congress in Mumbai. This book brought to light the Christian witness from the Kandhamal hills. As a journalist, he had given the facts of the happenings. He visited Kandhamal six times to meet the victims and listen to them. The testimonies of the persecuted Christians who refused to become Hindus even at the cost of their lives became a great challenge to the Sangh

⁷⁹⁰ Op. cit., Anto Akkara, *Who Killed Swami...*, 24.

⁷⁹¹ “When the first investigative book *Kandhamal – a blot on Indian Secularism* launched in New Delhi in April 2009, the veteran journalist Kuldip Nayar described the book as ‘one of the must-read books. During the Bangalore launch, Justice M. F. Saldana suggested that given the objectivity of the book, it should be treated as an ‘official report’ of the Kandhamal violence and the government should act on it. K. G. Kannabiran, president of People’s Union for Civil Liberties, hailed the book as ‘a charge-sheet on Kandhamal during the launch in Hyderabad. Renowned litterateur Sukumar Azhikode recommended the book to be made a ‘text book’ at its release at the Kerala Sahitya Academy.” <http://www.antoakkara.com/home>. Accessed on 16/04/2017.

⁷⁹² *Krishna Janmashtami*, also known simply as *Janmashtami* or *Gokulashtami*, is an annual Hindu festival that celebrates the birth of Lord Krishna, the eighth *avatar* of Vishnu. It is observed according to Hindu lunisolar calendar, on the eighth day (*Ashtami*) of the *Krishna Paksha* (dark fortnight) in the month of *Shrawana* of the Hindu calendar, which overlaps with August and September of the Gregorian calendar. It is an important festival particularly to the *Vaishnavism* tradition of Hinduism. Dance-drama enactments of the life of Krishna according to the *Bhagavata Purana*, devotional singing through the midnight when Krishna is believed to have been born, fasting, a night vigil and a festival on the following day are parts of the Janmashtami celebrations.

⁷⁹³ Op. cit., Anto Akkara, *Kandhamal – A Blot...*, 19.

Parivar. It became a great strength to other Christians in India.⁷⁹⁴ He also published an enlarged version of *Shining Faith in Kandhamal* with the atrocities of the Sangh Parivar titled 'Early Christians of 21st Century' in February 2013. The book has two parts: the first part focused on the witness of the Christians in Kandhamal who preferred to sacrifice all their possessions and even their lives as true followers of Christ. The second part explores the depths of the orchestrated anti-Christian violence.⁷⁹⁵

Akkara published another book in August 2013 with the title *Kandhamal Craves for Justice*.⁷⁹⁶ It probed deeper into the brutal killings, the plight of refugees, orchestrated propaganda, a callous response of the administration and the silence of the National Human Rights Commission on Kandhamal riots. He boldly criticised the administration for allowing Manoj Pradhan, the Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) who threatened the witnesses, letting his people and police sit in the premises of the Fast Track Courts in Phulbani. He demanded an impartial inquiry by the National Investigation Agency through this book.⁷⁹⁷ He boldly criticised and brought out the truth about the Sangh Parivar's manipulation of their activities in relation to violence against the Christians in Kandhamal. He questioned the Biju Janatha Dal (BJD) and the BJP collision government of Odisha State for their negligence to provide security for the people who wanted to resettle in their villages.⁷⁹⁸

In May 2016, Akkara published an investigative book titled *Who Killed Swami Laxmanananda?*⁷⁹⁹ In that book, he questioned the judgement against the seven accused Christians who were convicted to life imprisonment on 3 October 2013, despite the prosecution having produced hardly any credible evidence during the over four-year trial. He disproved certain arguments and evidence which were produced against the Christians in the court.⁸⁰⁰ Particularly, the controversial Betticola resolution that was

⁷⁹⁴ Op. cit., Anto Akkara, *Shining Faith...*, 14.

⁷⁹⁵ Op. cit., Anto Akkara, *Early Christians...*, 14.

⁷⁹⁶ On the 5th Kandhamal anniversary in 2013, the journalist author brought out a book, *Kandhamal Craves for Justice* drawing national attention to the travesty of justice. While Justice Ajit Prakash Shah, former chief justice of Delhi, acclaimed that 'the book has a story to tell'. The Tehelka magazine noted that in the book, the author 'tells the horror and its aftermath.' <http://www.antoakkara.com/home>. Accessed on 16/04/2017.

⁷⁹⁷ Op. cit., Anto Akkara, *Kandhamal Craves...*, 207.

⁷⁹⁸ Ibid., 183.

⁷⁹⁹ This investigative book brought out in May 2016, has been the journalist author's masterpiece on Kandhamal. It laid bare the fraud perpetrated by Hindu nationalists and the shocking travesty of justice with seven innocent Christians languishing in jail for a crime they never committed. It got the attention of the political leaders. <http://www.antoakkara.com/home>.

⁸⁰⁰ Op. cit., Anto Akkara, *Who Killed Swami*, 125.

alleged to have been passed by the Catholic parish of Betticola on 25 May 2008 to assassinate Swami Lakshmanananda on *Janmashtami* day. It was relied upon in the judgement to conclude that the Swami's murder was indeed a Christian conspiracy. However, the Additional Superintendent of Police, Crime Branch, in his deposition on 25 June 2015, before the Justice Naidu commission of Inquiry declared that the controversial resolution was forged.⁸⁰¹ He also exposed the uncharacteristic judicial language in the opening paragraph of the crucial judgement which says, "The Missionaries those who used charity as a façade for converting people away from their native faith alliance of Maoists are the perpetrators and conspirators of the assassination of Swami."⁸⁰² Contrary to this categorical declaration of the conspiracy of the missionaries and Maoists to eliminate Swamiji, the judgement failed to offer credible evidence to substantiate the link between missionaries and Maoists. Arun Kumar Ray, Deputy Inspector General for Police for Southern Range of Odisha, during his cross-examination on 7 July 2015, in follow-up to his affidavit filed on 14 September 2009, before Justice S. C. Mahapatra Commission of Inquiry admitted that "During the investigation, Steps were taken to ascertain about the alleged monetary transaction between the Maoists and the Christian community as we received some allegations to that effect but after investigation the said allegation could not be substantiated."⁸⁰³

Akkara exposed the underground Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) work of forging documents in order to substantiate their propaganda against Christians for the murder of Swamiji. Ram Madhav, the RSS spokesperson, gave a set of books, CDs and DVDs of secret RSS products as a gift to a top Catholic Church official in 2012.⁸⁰⁴ There was a book titled *Harvest of Hate – Kandhamal in Crossfire* authored by American anthropologist Michael Parker. It describes Christianity as a defeated truth and was published by the uncertain India Foundation in 2009.⁸⁰⁵ The same book was published by the same India Foundation with the different title *Orissa in the Crossfire – Kandhamal Burning* and with a different author, Brannon Parker. Akkara raised the question of the identity of the book's author: Michael Parker or Brannon Parker or neither? The director of the India Foundation was Nirmala Sitharaman, a leading

⁸⁰¹ Ibid., 149.

⁸⁰² Ibid., 151.

⁸⁰³ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁴ Ibid., 209.

⁸⁰⁵ Ibid., 208.

politician of BJP. It was evidently proved that the Sangh Parivar was running the India Foundation for their propaganda against Christians.⁸⁰⁶ Akkara found a DVD titled *The Agony of Kandhamal*, a product of India Foundation along with other gifts. It portrayed Hindus as victims and that too by forging testimonies of battered Christians and camouflaged them as Hindu victims. He boldly criticised the insidious ways of the RSS propaganda machinery in his book.⁸⁰⁷

In order to make his publications popular, Akkara organised functions for the book release in big cities and invited journalist, senior lawyers, judges, social activists, church leaders and leading politicians. The invited dignitaries spoke on the book which was released on a particular day got the attention of the media, and it reached the common people, the officials and the politicians. It was part of the campaign against the injustice done to the Kandhamal Christians, particularly to bring out the truth behind the conspiracy of Swami Lakshmanananda's death and to release the innocent seven Christians who were in jail, accused of Swami Lakshmanananda's murder.⁸⁰⁸

Akkara also organised an online campaign to release the seven innocent Christians from jail. For that, on 3 March 2016, he brought the illiterate wives of the seven innocent convicts from remote Kandhamal jungles to New Delhi to launch the online campaign www.release7innocents.com. The campaign was led by veteran journalist Kuldeep Nayar. The online signatures initially generated three instant emails to the Chief Justice of India, the President of India and Chairman of the National Human Rights Commission demanding the release of the innocents.⁸⁰⁹

The revised edition of the book *Who Killed Swami Laxmanananda?* was launched on 28 December 2017 in New Delhi. Veteran journalist Kuldeep Nayar and leaders of opposition political parties highlighted the judicial farce of justice in Kandhamal exposed by the book, leading to news headlines like 'Book questions conviction of Christians in Kandhamal violence' and 'Time to preserve liberated India', says Kuldeep Nayar. Prafulla Samantara, the social activist and the secular conscience keeper of Odisha, stood by the author and over three dozen media persons attended the release of the revised edition of the book in Bhubaneswar, Odisha capital, on 4 January

⁸⁰⁶ Ibid., 210

⁸⁰⁷ Ibid., 223.

⁸⁰⁸ Anto Akkara, "Bear Witness to the Truth," <http://www.antoakkara.com/home>. Accessed on 16/04/2017.

⁸⁰⁹ Ibid.

2018. As a result, most of the media headlines were like ‘Sangh Parivar’s role in Swami’s murder’, ‘Mockery of judicial system’, ‘People fooled’, and ‘Hindus question conviction of innocent Christians’. The local Odiya vernacular media exposed the Kandhamal fraud through the Catholic News channel UCAN dispatch titled ‘Social activist challenges Kandhamal fraudsters’.⁸¹⁰

9.10 Reactions of international bodies

On 24 September 2008, the European Union (EU) raised concern over the violence against Christians in Odisha and urged the Indian government to safeguard the Christian minority in India. At the time of EU-India Summit on 29 September 2008 the French President Sarkozy charged the Indian government for not protecting its own people. An EU delegation made visits to Kandhamal in December 2008. The US House of Representatives passed a resolution on 26 September 2008, objurgating the religious violence in India and urged the Indian Government to stop the violence and bring peace by addressing its root causes. The violent attacks against Christians were recorded with great concern in the 2009 report of the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion. The UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office Annual Report on Human Rights 2008 also highlighted the Kandhamal issue during the launch of the US State Department International Religious Freedom Report 2008.⁸¹¹

9.11 Conclusion

Kandhamal Christians belonged to tribal and Dalit communities. They were dominated in all aspects of life by the outside caste Hindus who settled illegally in Kandhamal. The communal violence was allegedly instigated by the caste Hindus who were the leaders of the Sangh Parivar. The communities in Kandhamal, being tribal and Dalit, felt inferior to the caste Hindus. Most of the top leaders of the political parties and government officials belonged to the caste Hindus. When the riots broke out, the minority tribal and Dalit Christians were caught in a vulnerable situation. Since the BJP was part of the ruling government at that time, the Christians did not get any timely help from the government. The motive of the violent mobs was very clear and focused. They destroyed the Christians’ houses and churches. They killed the Christians who refused to convert to Hinduism. The immediate response of the Christians to the

⁸¹⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹¹ A Report of Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Nov. 6, 2009. <http://2mil-indiaarticles.blogspot.in/2009/11/>. Accessed on 21/05/2018.

violence was to save their lives. For that, they left behind their belongings and ran to the forest, and thereafter moved to the camps.

Some of the Christians who refused to deny Christ boldly faced their deaths; others who wanted to survive underwent a conversion ceremony to Hinduism. However, most of them later returned to their Christian faith. The widows of the killed ones were bold enough to file FIR against the culprits. They considered their husbands as martyrs and built tombs for them to symbolise the reaffirmation of their Christian faith. Churches were rebuilt as big as possible with big towers and cross on the top to showcase the living faith of the communities. The Christian NGOs organised rallies and meetings to create solidarity among the Christians from different denominations, as well as to bring confidence and courage among the victims. They also helped the victims to get justice and compensation. They advocated on behalf of the Kandhamal victims and brought out the issues at the national and international levels. They also worked towards the reconciliation and restoration of peace in Kandhamal.

Most of the local tribal village people regretted what had happened to their Christian neighbours. The tribal leaders expressed that without their knowledge the tribal youth had joined outsiders in the time of mob violence. A few of the rioters accepted Christianity, and they openly confessed their faith experience. Some rioters died abruptly, and others were affected by various misfortunes. Such incidents created fear among the tribals. So, when Christians resettled and re-established their institutions and rebuilt the churches, there were no objections from the locals.

Christian leaders from different denominations joined together to work for the development of the Kandhamal people. They jointly appealed to the national and international communities for justice. In support of the victims, Anto Akkara, the Christian journalist, is working continuously to bring justice to the victims. His investigative writings and mobilising the intellectuals can be understood as a worried Christian's response to the Sangh Parivar.

CHAPTER TEN

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF HINDU NATIONALISM AND RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE IN KANDHAMAL, INDIA

10.1 Introduction

The relationship between different religious communities in India was measured on the basis of the attitude of the rulers in different times. The Mughal Empire in India, which lasted for almost two centuries (1526–1707), broadly witnessed two different phases of Hindu–Muslim interactions. The first was that of religious tolerance during the reign of Akbar the great (1542–1605). Akbar’s *Ibadat Khana*, the hall for religious discussions, and *Din-i-Ilahi*, his newly founded ‘divine religion’, were the expressions of his religious tolerance and attempts to bridge the two religions. Likewise, the Pundits who participated in the *Ibadat Khana and the Parabrahma Sampradaya of Dadu (1544–1603)* represented the liberal trends in Hinduism.⁸¹² The second phase was, however, the reversal of Akbar’s religious policy and the attempts to advance the interests of Islam in all possible ways by the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb (1658–1707). It was during the reign of Emperor Aurangzeb that Muslim communalism increased and resulted in Hinduism to see and approach Islam as an enemy.⁸¹³ After Aurangzeb, the Muslim rule in India declined. The period from 1707 to 1858 saw the rise of the Maratha Kingdom of a Hindu dynasty, which had a tremendous impact upon the Hindus. During this period, conversions and reconversions were carried out with unprecedented zeal and vigour.⁸¹⁴ This enmity between the two communities resulted in their failure to fight together against the British power, and they were subjugated by the colonial power. Loss of political supremacy robbed the vitality of these two religions. Under the British, the gulf dividing these two communities continued as wide as it had been under the Muslim rule.⁸¹⁵

The European colonial period marked the beginning of a new era in Hindu–Christian relationships in India. The Christian fanaticism was particularly high under the Portuguese rule. The Hindus who lived within their territory were ordered either to

⁸¹² R. C. Majumdar, ed. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. 7, 2nd ed. (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1984), 633.

⁸¹³ Ibid.

⁸¹⁴ Ibid., 726.

⁸¹⁵ C. V. Mathew, *The Saffron Mission* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2001), 47.

become Christians or to vacate the place. Temples were closed and their properties confiscated.⁸¹⁶ Later, the Marathas defended their land and religion against foreign rulers. Subsequently, a spirit of encounter gradually emerged among the Hindus. A new spirit of intellectual or ideological resistance developed among the Orthodox Hindus.⁸¹⁷ It was a slow but steady emergence of Hinduism resistance in the national context. The modern missionary movement of Hinduism emerged in this context which was pioneered by the Arya Samaj.⁸¹⁸ The Samaj endeavoured to consolidate the Hindu power in India and to convert former Hindus and non-Hindus to Hinduism. The emergence of aggressive nationalism merged with the Hindu renaissance brought in the process of the politicisation of Hinduism. For example, the popularisation of Ganapati festival and procession as a ten-day celebration to match and counter the Muslim festival of Muharram, and the introduction of the Shivaji festival were well designed to create and promote Hindu pride intertwined with nationalism.⁸¹⁹

Religious communal violence in India resulted from Hindu nationalism due to European colonialism and favouritism based on religious identities. The British colonial government followed the policy of 'divide and rule'. In 1909, the Muslims were given the right of separate electorates under this policy.⁸²⁰ They created a division between the majority Hindus and minority Muslims through government policies. The British favoured the minority Muslims, which created bitterness against the Muslims among the majority Hindus.⁸²¹ At the time of independence, the leaders believed that the partition of India and Pakistan would resolve the problem of communal violence. However, communal violence continued even after the partition of India in 1947. The newly converted Christians also became victims of the communal violence after the British left India, due to their colonial link and religious identity.⁸²²

Several causes and multiple factors are involved in the continuous tension between the communities which led to communal violence and riots from time to time.

⁸¹⁶ John Chethimattam, *Dialogue in Indian Tradition* (Bangalore: Dharmaram College, 1969), 134.

⁸¹⁷ Richard Fox Young, *Resistant Hinduism* (Vienna: Indological Institute, University of Vienna, 1981), 16.

⁸¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁸¹⁹ *Op. cit.*, C. V. Mathew, *The Saffron...*, 25.

⁸²⁰ Akhtar Hussain Sandhu, "Reality of divide and rule in British India," *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture*, Vol. 30, No. 1, Jan. 2009. p. 67.

⁸²¹ S. Radhakrishnan, *The Heart of Hindusthan*, 3rd ed. (Madras: G. A. Natesan & Co., 1949), 25.

⁸²² Ian Talbot and Gurharpal Singh, *The Partition of India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 22.

All of these reasons, individually and collectively, linked to communal interests that could erupt into irrational violence even with the slightest provocations. Though there was a communal element in most of the riots, each incident has an immediate factor that led to communal violence.⁸²³ There are micro and macro-level factors that played their role in communal violence. The macro-level factors are often of an ideological nature and they have nationwide ramification. On the contrary, the nature of micro-level factors is mostly non-ideological, and they have ramification locally. Both the factors have integral connections with the process of socio-political development in India.⁸²⁴ This chapter will elaborate on those factors that are responsible for the outburst of communal violence in India, particularly in Kandhamal, Odisha.

10.2 Common factors

The postcolonial reading of the history of the British rule in India helped us to understand the ‘divide and rule’ policy of the British. The ‘divide and rule’ policy, which was applied to the Hindu–Muslim relations, resulted in creating the historical Hindu–Muslim antagonism. This mutual hatred and enmity between the communities led them to indulge in serious battles, posing danger to the security. After the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, the British rulers divided the Indian population into communal lines, particularly the Hindus and Muslims.⁸²⁵ The first census took place in India under the colonial rule in 1872. This census created communal consciousness and brought the minority and majority divide in the early twentieth century.⁸²⁶ The census also created a territorial and demographic consciousness among different religious groups. The census data taken based on religion created tension between different religious communities based on the size and growth. In 1905, the partition of Bengal took place on the basis of religion which is an example of stimulating religious communalism by the British policy of ‘divide and rule’. In 1909, it was further entrenched by the introduction of separate electorates based on religion and the allotment of seats for legislative bodies on the basis of the religious strength in the provinces. This heightened

⁸²³ Zoya Khaliq Hasan, “Communalism and communal violence in India,” *Social Scientist*, Vol. 10, No. 2, Feb. 1982. 26.

⁸²⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁸²⁵ Neil Stewart, “Divide and rule: British policy in Indian history,” *Science & Society*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 1951. p. 53.

⁸²⁶ R.N.P. Singh, *Riots and Wrongs, Islam and Religious Riots: A Case Study* (India First Foundation, New Delhi, 2004), 118.

the communal antagonism that was prevalent in the country.⁸²⁷ From that time, the relationship between Hindus and Muslims turned bitter. After the independence of India in 1947, the people in power continued to apply the 'divide and rule' policy of the British rulers to keep the people divided and always fighting. The country's partition also created bitterness and communalised political development in post-Independence India. Before the partition of the country, all people of the country had one identity, that is Indian, but the partition made Muslim and Christian minority communities in India, and at the same time, making Hindus, Sikhs and Christian minority communities in Pakistan. Allegations of oppression of minorities have been made from time to time in both the countries. This led a gradual increase of distrust and disharmony and ruined the peaceful and harmonious living of the people of India.⁸²⁸

10.2.1 Struggle for identity

Caste and tribal identities always infused Indian society, but communalism was introduced by the colonial rule in the context of the development of Indian economy. At the same time, the rise of modern politics and social classes took place. There was growing internal divisions and resentment within the society because of the impact of colonial economy and the economic stagnation. The caste and class divisions boosted the chance for communal violence and social tension at the community level. People groups behaved uniquely according to their economic status. Basically, the caste and class issues, not religion, were the root causes of several communal disturbances in India.⁸²⁹ According to Max Weber's Social Action Theory, human action is driven by meaning and motives.⁸³⁰ In Kandhamal, the theory of ethnic conflict played out between the tribal Konds and the Dalit Panas. The Dalit Panas identified themselves as tribals since they also speak 'Kui' when the Presidential Order as amended in 2002 showed the 'Kui' community as Scheduled Tribe. The objection raised by the Konds to include 'Kui'-speaking Panas in the Scheduled Tribe category created the communal violence in 2007.⁸³¹ The Konds vehemently opposed on the ground that speaking the

⁸²⁷ Ravindra Kumar, ed. *Problem of Communalism in India* (New Delhi: Mittal Publication, 1990), 12. Cf. John R. Mclane, "The decision to partition Bengal in 1905," *The Indian Economic & Social Review*, Vol. 2, No. 3, Jul. 1965, 222 (221–237).

⁸²⁸ Op. cit., Akhtar Hussain Sandhu, 62.

⁸²⁹ N.C. Saxena, "The nature and origin of communal riots in India," in A.A. Engineer, ed. *Communal Riots in Post-Independence India* (Hyderabad: Sangam Books Pvt. Ltd., 1991), 60.

⁸³⁰ Op. cit., Max Weber, *The Theory of Social...*, 88.

⁸³¹ Report of the committee constituted by the DGP Orisson Ethno-Religious conflict in Kandhamal District. 5.

same language would not make the Dalits into tribals. Here, the 'action' of the Panas did not conform to the worldview of the social actor Konds. Max Weber further states that religion is an important component of worldview; it directs human actions in a wide context. In Kandhamal, the religion of the Konds is not the same as the religion of the Panas. So, the worldview of the Konds was different from the worldview of the Panas. 'Action' is social where it takes other people into account. The person's worldview calculates the effect of having other people in it, in the form of expectations of how other people are going to behave.⁸³² As long as the Pana community serves the Konds in a traditional way with their Dalit identity, they were accepted and permitted to live among them.

Moreover, the majority of the Panas were Christians. The Christian identity of the Panas and their claim for tribal status became the root cause of the violence. One of the basic tenets of the dialogical self-theory is as follows: 'people are constantly involved in a process of positioning and repositioning themselves, not only in relation to other people but also in relation to themselves'. These positions are involved in relationships of social dominance and power. A large number of Panas took the identity of Christians. Christian identity created further complication because Christian Dalits were not permitted to benefit from the governmental benefits given to the Dalits who retained their Hindu identity. According to the Dialogical Self Theory, identity construction is a context-bound activity. Identity is a product of social interaction.⁸³³ In that case, the Panas identity is supposed to be bound with the tribal in the context, as they speak *Kui* and live in the hill area. However, as the majority of them were Christians, the tribal identity was not given to them. There are multiple positions from which society defines the individual, including public features such as characteristics of a group or the institutions to which the person belongs.⁸³⁴ A small group of high-caste Oriya Hindus settled in Kandhamal and control the socio-economic and religious-political setup of Kandhamal. The Sangh Parivar worked through Lakshmanananda and the high-caste Hindu Oriyas to establish the Hindu identity to the tribal Konds. In order

⁸³² Randall Collins, *Max Weber: Masters of Social Theory*, Vol. 3 (England: SAGE Publication LTD, 1986). 44.

⁸³³ Chapter 2. 8

⁸³⁴ Op. cit., H. J. M. Herman and Hermans-Konopka, A. *Dialogical Self Theory...*, 127.

to maintain the caste hierarchy, the Sangh Parivar coerced the Christians in Kandhamal to adopt Hindu identity.⁸³⁵

Most often, religion is employed to justify conflicts of interests. Hence, communal conflicts are a means for a community to assert its communal identity and to claim their share in economic, educational and job opportunities. Marxists presented communal conflict is an outcome of the present capitalist order.⁸³⁶ Politicisation of religion, poverty and a particularly factious style of politics aggravated the problem in Kandhamal, which seems to be fundamental to a heterogeneous society.

10.3 The economic factor

There was an economic factor behind the communal violence in Kandhamal. The development process in Kandhamal led to economic competition among the different communities. Economic competition among the different sectors of society often results in social tensions which can easily turn into communal violence. Communal conflicts burst out to ensure that people do not start recognising themselves with the economic class to which they belong.⁸³⁷ The main allegation of the Sangh Parivar against the Christians was the continuous financial help received from abroad for their establishment and conversion. There were many churches, schools, convents and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that were established by Christians in Kandhamal with the support of foreign aid. The Christian Panas enjoyed the benefits of Scheduled Caste from the government and also received financial aids from Christians abroad. Therefore, they progressed economically faster than the other religious communities in the region. This unique economic progress of the Panas resulted in social tensions with the other communities.⁸³⁸ Communal forces often exploit the poor by mobilising them against other communities. In Kandhamal, the Sangh Parivar mobilised the Konds against the Christian Panas, alleging that the Pana Christians grabbed all the resources and opportunities of the Konds. The economic backwardness in a society not only leads to communal tensions, but it results in violence against women and the weaker sections of the society as well.⁸³⁹

⁸³⁵ Op. cit., Angana P. Chatterji, *Violent Gods...*, 297.

⁸³⁶ Gopal Krishna, "Communal violence in India," in S. I. Wilkinson, ed. *Religious Politics and Communal Violence* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), 151.

⁸³⁷ Op. cit., N.C. Saxena, 61.

⁸³⁸ Op. cit., A Report by PUCL, 4. Cf. Chapter 5. 5. 1

⁸³⁹ Op. cit., Angana P. Chatterji, *Violent Gods...*, 291.

10.4 The political factor

When religion became the central focus of the political debates, religious ideas influenced decisions of the political parties and government. “By participating in the political process and by being at the same time the subject and the object politics, religion contests the strict boundary between the religious and the secular institutions. Furthermore, by becoming a collective actor on the political scene, religion is bound to have an impact which is larger than the private sphere. As religion enters the public sphere through policy discourse, it becomes voice of equal strength to that of secular institutions. Moreover, by entering the public sphere as both the subject and the object of controversy, religion is bound to attract quite a lot of attention.”⁸⁴⁰

Using Hinduism as a defining political category, religion becomes highly politicised, inviting both a discussion in terms of struggles of power, argumentation in the name of belief and a negotiation of religious and ethnic authority. The complex discussions around *Hindutva* put religion in a prominent place and opened the discussion about the limits of secularism and democracy. During discussions on political issues in the public space, the Hindu fundamentalists use religious sentiments to divert from the political issues and provoke the Hindu majority against the religious minorities. Thus, the definition of citizenship can be seen as interference with religiously defined morality and virtue, leading to the religionisation of politics. The *Hindutva* politics became a danger to the diverse nature of India characterised of modernity.⁸⁴¹

There was a growing tendency to maximise political gains by claiming a link to ancient identity, money and muscle power, communal slogans, ideological issues, etc. Prabha Dixit also regarded communalism as “a political doctrine that makes use of religious and cultural differences in achieving political gains”.⁸⁴² Communalism and communal tensions are a means of political affirmation. Generally, politics emerges out of conflict resolution. The objectives of the different communities are to attain maximum political power and, by using it, to obtain political advantage as a means to serve the interests of their community.⁸⁴³

⁸⁴⁰ Carolina Ivanescu, “Politicised Religion and the Religionisation of Politics,” *Culture and Religion*, Vol.11, No. 4, December 2010, 312.

⁸⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 314.

⁸⁴² *Op. cit.*, R.N.P. Singh, *Riots and Wrongs...*, 115.

⁸⁴³ *Ibid.*

The different communities were in fierce competition for political advantages. As a consequence, communal groups were supported by the political parties.⁸⁴⁴ The ever-increasing prosperity of the Panas disturbed the tribal political leadership of Kandhamal. The political enmity also led to communal tension. Political rivalry in an already polarised and politically unstable region that had also witnessed a series of social violence proved to be a communal time-bomb waiting to explode at any given moment. Politicians were not interested in bridging the gap between communities, but they wanted to keep the wide as possible. They were successful in misleading their nascent fellow-religionists to achieve their selfish goals, which were not really the interests of the people.⁸⁴⁵

Socio-political issues are often deployed to engineer communal violence. ‘One of the basic tenets of dialogical self-theory is that people are constantly involved in a process of positioning and repositioning themselves, not only with reference to other people but also in relation to themselves’. These positioning have a bearing on the relationships of social dominance and power.⁸⁴⁶ The principal aspects that surfaced in Kandhamal were the identity and conversion controversies. The demand of the Panas to get the tribal identity on the basis of the 2002 Presidential Order and a large number of Panas’ conversions to Christianity created tension between the Konds and Panas.⁸⁴⁷ Swami Lakshmanananda came to Kandhamal with the agenda to stop the conversion activities of the Christian missionaries by converting the tribals to Hinduism. The political and institutional powers dialogically influenced the Konds and gave them a new identity of ‘Hindu’. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) pitched for *Hindutva* ideology at the macro level to achieve its goal. In Kandhamal, the Sangh Parivar used the local issues such as reservation, land, conversion and economic issues to divide the Konds and Panas in order to gain their political mileage based on *Hindutva* ideology.⁸⁴⁸

⁸⁴⁴ Report of the committee constituted by the DGP Orisson Ethno-Religious conflict in Kandhamal District. 4.

⁸⁴⁵ Akhilesh Kumar, *Communal Riots in India: Study of Social and Economic Aspects* (New Delhi: Commonwealth Publishers, 1991), 46.

⁸⁴⁶ Op. cit., H. J. M. Herman and Hermans-Konopka, A. *Dialogical Self Theory...*, 127.

⁸⁴⁷ Paul Divakar, Sirivella Prasad and Annie Namala, “Do we have freedom of faith with dignity?” Op. cit., JPDC, 131.

⁸⁴⁸ Chapter 5. 5.

10.5 The partisan role of the state

The biased role of the state machinery particularly that of the police in Kandhamal acted in favour of the rioters. The partisan approach of the police and the local administration allowed small disputes to become major communal violent events. According to Sister Meena's press report, she was caught, stripped half-naked, raped and paraded by the Sangh Parivar in the presence of the police.⁸⁴⁹ The police officers and officials were bias in their approach and joined up the Hindu mobs in destroying and looting the Christians' properties while making arrests. The police turned a blind eye to the atrocities carried out by Hindu rioters. They were not even willing to register the complaints lodged against the Hindu rioters. For this reason, many of the communal incidents remained unreported to the police.⁸⁵⁰

In a communal violence, the marginalised community members are often victims of threats and harassments in the hands of the members of the dominant community. Since the communal violence in Kandhamal was politically motivated, the choice before the Christians was either to face death or to depart from the village. The loss of interpersonal trust and mutual acceptances resulted in mutual hatred, fear and bitterness between the different communities. During the time of violence, neighbours, acquaintances and friends become enemies and actively take part in attacking each other. The police allegedly did not take any initiative to bring down the tension between the communities or to prevent communal violence in Kandhamal.⁸⁵¹

10.6 Religious factors

Religion is one of the major factors responsible for the inception and development of communal tensions in India. Religion moulds the attitude of its followers. Religious sentiments are used by politicians to create communal tension which mostly resulted in violence. Conversion is a prime reason for communal tension and violence. The mass conversions often caused great resentments among people. The conversion of Dalits to Christianity in Kandhamal communalised the minds of the Hindus. The conversion

⁸⁴⁹ Interview with Fr. Cassian Pradhan on 03/11/2016. Interview with Kumuda Kumar Nayak a social worker of Jana Vikas on 04/11/2016. Cf. Op. cit., Anto Akkara, *Early Christians...*, 60. Fr. Thomas Chellan, "A Hindu mob began our crucifixion," *Catholic Information and News Service*. <http://www.vaticans.org/index.php?/archives/1240-A-Hindu-mob-began-our-crucifixion-parade>. Accessed on 12/09/ 2019.

⁸⁵⁰ Op. cit., Saumya Uma, *Breaking the Shackled...*, 37.

⁸⁵¹ Ibid.

issue was heightened the intensity of communal conflict in India and lead to communal violence in different parts of the country. The communal violence against the Christians in Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra and particularly in Odisha in 2008 was the reaction of the Sangh Parivar to the conversion of Dalits and tribals to Christianity. Kandhamal witnessed the highest percentage of growth of Christians within a short period. When the communal violence broke out in 2008 at Kandhamal, the Christians were forced to convert to Hinduism. So, it was very clear that conversion activities of the Christians provoked the Hindus.⁸⁵²

The claim of superiority of a particular religion is often the cause of religious conflicts. When people ignorantly followed their parent's religion, they show cruelty, jealousy and violence to cover up their ignorance and fear. Religious conflicts are usually brought about by those who were misguided to have undue faith in one's religious beliefs and thereby judge others based on their own faith. The Christians' claim of superiority over the other religious doctrines led to conflicts in Kandhamal. The destruction or desecration of worshipping places is also one of the reasons of religious conflicts. The Hindus and Christians accused each other of indulging in such acts.⁸⁵³ The Sangh Parivar alleged that Christians not only converted the Hindus to Christianity but also converted the worshipping places of Hindus into churches. The Hindu religious organisations (RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal) by presenting themselves as the champions of the Hindu religion, as well as the interests of the Hindu community, gathered the support of a large number of volunteers whom they can mobilise to fight the alleged injustice done to them. The large-scale contribution received from the people to help these organisations is interpreted as legitimising the organisation being the real representatives of their community. The tension between the religious groups intensified the communal divide, and leaders like Swami Lakshmanananda thrived by spreading hatred. The Sangh Parivar worked towards the extermination of the Christians and Muslims from India. The communal violence was thus organised by the politically affiliated groups like RSS, VHP and Bajrang Dal in Kandhamal.⁸⁵⁴

⁸⁵² Op. cit., JPDC, 31.

⁸⁵³ Anselm Biswal, "Swami Lakhmananda first bared his fangs in Kattingia in 1980s," Op. cit., JPDC, 183.

⁸⁵⁴ Parfulla Das, "Communal Card," *Frontline*, Vol.25, No. 19, Sep. 13–26, 2008. <http://www.frontline.in/navigation/?type=static&page=archive>. Accessed on 06/07/2018.

Religious rituals are deeply influenced by the community's culture and tradition. If there is tension between any two religious communities living together, it is almost always due to their rituals. Enmity was spread by exploiting the traditions of the different religious communities. One religious community became rival to another and tried to destroy it. Religion leads to communalism. Even a small difference in the public execution of religious rituals invokes violent reactions from the community. Those reactions are the result of the constant re-enforcement of the identities of religious groups through the continuous proliferation of the communal ideology of the particular community.⁸⁵⁵

In Kandhamal, the European Christians had forcefully stopped the practice of the *Meriah* (Human sacrifice) ritual which had created dissent between the tribal Konds and the Christians from the nineteenth century. The Sangh Parivar intensified communalism by introducing new rituals among the Konds, such as religious processions and using saffron colour as the Hindu dominant identity. Taking the new identity of Hindu, the Konds began to hate and distrust the Christians, claiming that the Christians are trying to destroy their religious tradition. Most of the communal violence took place on the days of festivals of either of the communities.⁸⁵⁶

Religious fanaticism is the outcome of constant preaching and actions of communal organisations. The Sangh Parivar intentionally indoctrinated the tribals to passionately accept some manipulated form of Hindu religious practices. However, such practices were never part of the actual tenets of the faith.⁸⁵⁷ The slogan is one such common feature practised in every communal group to motivate and unite people. Politicians and religious leaders mobilise people around certain slogans and ensure that the slogans are in use regularly. They use the ignorance and innocence of the people to promote the fanaticism. In Kandhamal, Swami Lakshmanananda was constantly preaching against the Christians and kept his followers hot-boiling against the Christians.⁸⁵⁸ The Sangh Parivar used slogans to mobilise people to fulfil their agenda in Kandhamal.

⁸⁵⁵ Anselm Biswal, "Swami Lakhmananda first bared his fangs in Kattingia in 1980s," Op. cit., JPDC, 184.

⁸⁵⁶ Angana P. Chatterji and Mihir Desai, eds. *Communalism in Orissa: Report of the Indian People's Tribunal* (Mumbai: Indian People's Tribunal, 2006), 46.

⁸⁵⁷ Op. cit., Pralay Kanungo, "Hindutva's Fury...", 16.

⁸⁵⁸ Op. cit., Angana P. Chatterji and Mihir Desai, 46.

10.7 *Yatras* (processions) and celebrations

The celebration of events, religious or otherwise, by holding huge *yatras* (processions) became the norm not only because it was the more visible and conspicuous form of celebration, but it could also be used as a show of strength and dominance. *Yatras* were also sometimes used as an opportunity to provoke or subjugate the others, even to the extent of unleashing violence. This was more so when local power politics were at stake. Supporters of communalism used religion for boundary definitions in politics and other spheres of life. As the public is most sensitive to religious sentiments, political leaders emphasised holding religious processions during festivals. They tried to boost religious solidarity by highlighting occasions when such demonstrations were infringed upon.⁸⁵⁹ The Hindu communalists were behind the reasons for the increase in ceremonial processions during festivals like ‘Durga Pooja’, ‘Ganesh Utsav’, ‘Rath Yatras’, etc. Not only had the frequency of religious processions increased, but the scales of participation had multiplied over the years as well. The religious communities started to use religious celebrations to show off their strength. There was a tendency of shouting slogans against the other religious community whenever procession had to pass through the territory of the rival group. This kind of incidents oftentimes resulted in communal conflicts. Thus, the celebrations and processions of religious communities also became one of the factors that triggered off communal clashes.⁸⁶⁰

In Kandhamal, the Sangh Parivar used the festivals to show off their economic, political and physical strength by decorating public places, using loudspeakers and organising huge mass processions. Use of saffron cloths and flags, and shouting slogans with arms in hand during such processions created fear among the Christians. On the other hand, it was mostly due to the majority Hindus’ reaction against the Christian festivals’ processions that the major riots in 2007 took place. The violence that followed the funeral procession of Swami Lakshmanananda in August 2008 was the peak of the communal violence in Kandhamal.⁸⁶¹

10.8 Renewal of fundamentalism

Fundamentalism is on the rise in all segments of Indian society. The displaying of religious symbols on vehicle and slogans shouting in public places spread rapidly to all

⁸⁵⁹ Op. cit., Christophe Jaffrelot, “The Hindu nationalist...,” 13.

⁸⁶⁰ Chapter 5. 5.

⁸⁶¹ Chapter 5. 5. Op. cit., Anto Akkara, *Kandhamal a Blot...*, 21.

the public places and state offices. The increasing number of participants in the religious activities of different communities indicates the rise of religious fundamentalism. New processions passed through new routes and disputed routes often resulted in violence. The building of new worshipping places and the restoration of old, decrepit and deserted worship places arouse anger, resentment and hostility of the opposite community in many places on several occasions. The noise made by loudspeakers in religious places, particularly, at the time of festival also led to disharmony on several occasions. The attempts that restrict such activities were considered as anti-religious and against the precept of religious freedom.⁸⁶² In such a backdrop, mass mobilisation programme, such as religious processions, are also used to provoke the sentiments of other communities. All these activities contributed to intolerance and enmity towards each other.

Both the communities had coexisted harmoniously until fundamentalism crept in to strain their relationship. In the later part of the nineteenth century, Hindu fundamentalism started to spread. The establishment of reform movements such as Arya Samaj started to promote Hindu nationalism.⁸⁶³ The move against cow slaughter and the use of the loudspeakers in churches became the areas of conflict between the two communities. Fundamentalists of both communities utilised all occasions to instigate the minds of the people. Nevertheless, it could not be disregarded that there were deep-rooted biases between Hindus and Christians against each other, which were used by the fundamentalists. They were exploiting the difference between the self-perception of one religious community and the perception of it by the antagonistic community to propagate fear, insecurity, mistrust and suspicions among their co-religionists. Thus, fundamentalists, like Swami Lakshmanananda, fed and fatten up communalism through communal propaganda and violence, rather than weakening the communalism of the other group.⁸⁶⁴

Due to increasing frustration and stress in day-to-day life, people turn to religion for comfort, and as a consequence, religious bodies are ravidly increasing all over the country, since India is a secular democratic nation. Sacrifices and rituals are richly organised, and the number of devotees who visit religious places and participate in

⁸⁶² Ibid., 5.5.

⁸⁶³ Chapter 3. 4. 1.

⁸⁶⁴ Chapter 6. 7.

celebrations keep increasing. These kinds of religious activities can be held responsible for the communal conflicts. One of the other main causes of conflict between the Hindus and Christians in Kandhamal was the economic factor. The rising expenditure on religious activities such as the construction of church buildings, schools and other infrastructures was interpreted by the Hindus as the flow of money from the West into India to strengthen the Christians.⁸⁶⁵

The socio-religious activities of the Christians and their organisational infrastructural development, along with each individual's economic growth, were sufficient reasons to evoke suspicion from the Hindu perspective. Such perception eventually led to communal conflict. Vigorous reactions were also evident when one community constructed its place of worship in an area where the other community is majority in number. Many a time, religion was not the fundamental reason of the communal conflict; rather, it is used by the Sangh Parivar who seek to play their game through it. Therefore, issues related to religion alone cannot be taken as a causative reason of communal conflicts.

⁸⁶⁵ Op. cit., A Report by PUCL, 4. Cf. Chapter 5. 5.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

CONCLUSION

Communal violence is the cumulative outcome of various factors prevailing in the society. Communal violence in Kandhamal also caused by various factors in different times. In general, religious fundamentalism, political aspirations, socio-economic conditions, cultural practices and traditions, historical standings and intellectual levels of the people involved contributed to communal discords. The role played by each of these factors may differ in different states or regions depending on the various religious communities, but the nature of the violence was not different. The single reason for the communal violence in Kandhamal was the religious sentiments of the majority Hindus exploited by the Sangh Parivar to subjugate the minority Christians for personal gains. This study brings the following conclusion.

The converted Christians were given special privileges, and their social identities were changed with new names. The European Christian missionaries described almost all the local customs and cultural practices as evil and barred them. The converted Christians were exposed to a new culture and religious practices. They gradually became loyal to the Europeans. The people who were in the lower strata of the society, particularly among the Dalits and tribals, were converted rapidly. The Christian converts refused to do the menial work, which disturbed the age-old fabric of social equilibrium of caste-based occupation. For this reason, the conversion of Dalits and tribals to Christianity was also considered a threat to the Hindu society.

The British imposed certain disciplines on their local workers in order to maintain equality and uniformity, particularly to the soldiers, which were not acceptable to the local Hindus and Muslims. The locals, who were not Christians, served the British with a suspicious mind. They suspected that any new regulation or discipline imposed on them might be an attempt to make them Christians. So, there was a visible rift between the British and the locals. From the very beginning, the European colonial rulers were identified as Christians by the locals. There were revolts against the British based on religious sentiments.

The elite caste Hindus felt threatened by Christianity. The ideology of *Hindutva* was developed as a result. In order to promote their ideology, the all-round glory and

greatness of the Hindu nation was proclaimed. They believed that to fight the colonial power, Indians must have a communal identity which cut across caste and sect.

The diverse and sectarian belief systems of India became a formal religion under the umbrella of Hinduism during the colonial era. Further, the people who did not belong to Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Jains, Parses, or Sikhs were recorded as Hindus by the British. This new identity brought all caste groups including Dalits and tribals together under one umbrella which helped the Hindu fundamentalists to promote the ideology of Hindu nationalism.

The British government introduced a democratic form of government with a provision for representations based on the strength of the different religious communities. For this reason, the Hindu fundamentalists vigorously opposed the conversion activities of the Muslims and Christians. The British also favoured certain religious communities by giving employment through a quota system. In order to safeguard the interest of the Hindus, the Hindu fundamentalists started forming organisations. These religious organisations were politically motivated with an agenda of 'Hindu nationalism'. During the freedom movements, the Hindu fundamentalists used the communal identity to unite people against the British.

The State of Odisha was under the influence of the Jagannath temple culture, The Sangh Parivar used the Jagannath tradition to propagate their idea of saffron brotherhood and demanded the complete surrender of the devotees to the Hindu nation.

The bitter experience of the Konds created hatred and animosity against the British. Further, the British had interrupted their day-to-day life activities and imposed laws in the name of civilisation. By abolishing the age-old practice of human sacrifice (*Meriah*), the British became a political enemy to the Konds.

The Christian moral values changed the socio-economic and cultural lifestyle of the new convert Christians. Christianity brought a new identity to the converts and division within the community. They were identified with the Europeans and considered as a threat to the local community in relation to the social and religious norms of the land.

Swami Lakshmanananda Saraswati converted the tribal community into Hindus by systematically introducing the Hindu gods and goddesses, Hindu scriptures and mode of worship. He admitted the Konds into the Hindu fold as Sudras by the ritual of

Shuddhi. He gave them new hope under larger Hindu identity by christening them with the name of Hindu gods. He also promoted the identity of Hindu against the Christian ‘others’ and projected the Christians as the enemies of the nation.

Lakshmanananda cleverly used the existing social issues to divide the communities in the name of religion. Often Christians were forcefully admitted into Hinduism through a *Shuddhi* ritual. Reconversion ceremonies were organised with big processions and rallies with the support of political leaders. Lakshmanananda was directly involved in creating controversies and spreading rumours which aroused the anger of the Sangh Parivar against the Christians and ended up in riots. Since the BJP, the political power was behind such violence, the local administration and the police were not active enough to protect the victims. The local print media and TV channels were in favour of the Sangh Parivar and aggravated the violence through their presentations.

The members of the Sangh Parivar were invariably present in all the violent incidents, which were carried out mostly during Christian festivals. Whether the causes of the violence were social or political, Christians were the victims. Christian institutions, churches and establishments were often targeted. The Sangh Parivar gradually increased the intensity of the violence in Kandhamal and targeted Christian leaders who were active in the grass-roots level to uplift the poor and downtrodden.

The Sangh Parivar hoped to destabilise the economy of the Christians and pressurise them to convert to Hinduism by destroying their properties. They therefore felt justified to attack the worship places, and raping and killing Christians to create fear among the people. Even the Hindus who helped their Christian neighbours were raped and killed. The major episodes of violence in 2007 and 2008 were well planned and executed by the Sangh Parivar.

In order to keep the people of Kandhamal voting for their party, they used communal violence as a tool to provoke the religious sentiments of the majority Hindus. They also picked up petty local issues and projected it as communal issues in different parts of the country.

Lakshmanananda and his followers made use of the socio-economic issues faced by the Konds and Panas and intensified the division and violence by twisting it as a religious one. The choice of Christmas day for a general strike itself showed how

the social issue was mixed up with religious communal identity. In the year 2007 was the first biggest riot spread all over Kandhamal and caused great damage to the Christian community.

When Lakshmanananda and his followers were killed the Sangh Parivar immediately accused the Christian community without any evidence. The local newspapers and TV channels supported the view of the Sangh Parivar and repeatedly telecasted the same. The following day, the police arrested two Christians as suspects in the Swami's murder case. The Sangh leaders immediately held a press conference on that day and declared that the Christian killers of Swami had been arrested. The press conference was telecasted in the media. The BJP coalition government of the state worked in favour of the Sangh Parivar's plan. A well-planned funeral procession was made to pass through the villages, and on the way, the marchers turned into a violent mob and destroyed the houses of Christians, churches and institutional buildings. Destroying documentary evidences and suppressing the number of deaths were part of the Sangh Parivar's strategy to avoid the persecution of the culprits and prevent the victims' next of kin from getting compensation. Though about 100 people were reportedly killed during the violence in 2008, the state government released compensation only for 32 murder cases, while all others were denied the compensation for lack of evidence.

By shouting Hindu religious slogans, the mobs identified themselves with the Sangh Parivar. No sympathy was shown even to children, women and handicapped people, which many people felt abhorrent. The Hindu neighbours who helped the Christians were also targeted. The Christian Panas and Christian Konds were victims because of their religious identity.

The use of petrol and diesel to burn the houses and worship places, and the transportation of the looted articles by trucks were evidence of outsiders' involvement in the riots. The very presence of the VHP national leader in the funeral procession showed that the Sangh Parivar took advantage of Swami Lakshmanananda's murder and organised the attack on the Christians in Kandhamal systematically. The fact that the violence was allowed to continue for another five months showed that the local administration was influenced by the Sangh Parivar's political power. Refusal to protect the victims or to file First Information Records (FIRs) against the criminals by the police was also evidence of the influence of political powers.

The Sangh Parivar's main agenda was to reconvert the Christians to Hinduism. So reconversion ceremonies were given importance during the period of violence; if a Christian refused to go through the ceremony, he/she was killed. Only the Christians who converted to Hinduism were allowed to resettle in some of the villages. The whole history of Kandhamal violence was a political vendetta of the Sangh Parivar against the Christians.

The Indian Christians underwent a phase of identity crisis in the context of raising Hindu nationalism. In order to assert their Indian identity, they adopted local cultural elements in their worship and ceremonies. Indian Christian theologians brought out Indian Christian theologies based on Hindu scriptural understanding of God and eliminated Western culture and philosophy. They also insisted that the constitutional right of religious freedom had to be practiced in India. Religious freedom is a 'fundamental right' for all citizens. Religious freedom means respecting the beliefs of others. It should bring all people together and motivate peace, tolerance and respect. The variety of cultural background of India should be recognised. Fundamentalism and communalism should not left uncriticised even when it is found within Christianity. Christians also stepped up their social and political activities to manifest their participation towards nation-building.

The Kandhamal Christians stood fast with their faith in spite of the attacks, tortures and killings they were subjected to. The wives of the martyrs were bold enough to file FIRs against the culprits and also built huge tombs for their husbands to reaffirm their Christian faith. All the Christians who were forcefully converted to Hinduism during the time of riots returned to their Christian faith later. Different denominational churches had worked together to bring justice and peace by organising rallies and meetings. The churches in India responded to the Kandhamal crisis and helped the Kandhamal Christians to rebuild the churches and institutions which revived and restored Christian faith and identity in Kandhamal.

This study as a better knowledge of the recent history of the churches in Kandhamal will help the Indian Christians to understand the politicisation of religion in the Indian politics. The church will work for inclusive community development which may bring peace and happiness to the people of Kandhamal.

With this study, the Indian church will realise the present socio-political context of the country where it is rooted. Often, the churches in India did not respond to the reality of the political setting. Hopefully, the Indian church will realise its role in politics. There are too many Christian denominations with conflicting interests in every part of the nation. The church also may realise the need for unity among the various denominational churches. The churches in India will have as a primary focus on justice and peace to all. By celebrating the martyrs' day and erecting monuments for the martyrs, the church in Kandhamal turned the painful history into a memorable one, which helps the Kandhamal Christians to overcome their vulnerable situation.

The different arguments that emerged as theories out of the Kandhamal violence have been clarified with clear evidence in this study. It has concluded that the primarily factor of the entire episode was the religious identity of the Christians in Kandhamal. This study may encourage the Christians in India to take precautionary measures to avoid such situations. This study will also help the international community to know this aspect of the socio-political reality in India.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

**Martyrs of Kandhamal riots in 2007 and 2008 as it is recorded in the book titled
Flames of Faith (2018) written by Udayanath Bishoyi.**

| S. No. | Name of Martyrs | Village |
|---------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 | Abhimanyu Nayak | Barapali, Chakapada |
| 2 | Ajit Digal | Gardingia |
| 3 | Ajuba Ku.Digal | Barakhama |
| 4 | Akbar Digal` | Sulesaru |
| 5 | Antima Deo | Bogadi |
| 6 | Baby Nayak | Sraniketa |
| 7 | Balia Mallick | Dadkongia (H) |
| 8 | Baliarsingh Digal | Barakhoma – 2007 |
| 9 | Banadev Pradhan | Pajimaha |
| 10 | Bastina Mantry | Bhaliapada |
| 11 | Basumati Digal | Dogapadar (Tikabali) |
| 12 | Baxi Singh | Sisapanga |
| 13 | Bhagaban Nayak | Tellingia |
| 14 | Bhumika Digal | Padrikia (Gumamaha) |
| 15 | Bibhdendra Biswal | Padampur (Boudh) |
| 16 | Bidyadhar Digal | Dimiriguda |
| 17 | Bikram Nayak | Tiangia – Budidipada |
| 18 | Bimala Digal | Sainpada |
| 19 | Bisendra Mallick | Bonimilla (H) Parmpanga |
| 20 | Bispati Digal | Dagapadar, Tikabali |
| 21 | Dasarathi Pradhan | Tiangia |
| 22 | Dibyasundar Digal | Tiangia – Sipaeju |
| 23 | Dinabandhu Pradhan | Lamungia (H) |
| 24 | Dusasana Majhi | Sindhipakal (Mundigarh) |
| 25 | Duti Naik | Kupaguda |
| 26 | Fidam Nayak | Breka |

| | | |
|----|--------------------|----------------------------|
| 27 | Fr. Bernard Digal | Tiangia – Pdisubali |
| 28 | Gabinda Nayak | Barakhoma – 2007 |
| 29 | Gayadhar Digal | Kasinipadar |
| 30 | Ghagara Nayak | Tota Sahi (Barakhoma) 2007 |
| 31 | Gopan Nayak | Badimunda |
| 32 | Gunduri Nayak | Kasinipadar |
| 33 | Hrudananda Nayak | Rudangia |
| 34 | Iswara Digal | Mallikapadi |
| 35 | Janamati Nayak | Bakingia |
| 36 | Jhunima Parichha | Gumamaha |
| 37 | Jubaraj Digal | Kanjamendi |
| 38 | Kaina Pradhan | Kurmingia |
| 39 | Kallya Pradhan | Sartaguda, Burbinaju |
| 40 | Kamesh Digal | Gunjibadi |
| 41 | Kanatheswar Digal | Sankarakhol |
| 42 | Kanjura Nayak | Kritangia |
| 43 | Kasari Digal | Majumaha (Tiangia) |
| 44 | Kasipatra Digal | Totamaha (Mundakia) |
| 45 | Krushna Ch Pradhan | Panganaju |
| 46 | Kumuda Bardhan | Mukundapur (Gajapati) |
| 47 | Kundan Montry | Alanjury – 2007 |
| 48 | Laba Rupamajhi | Talipata, Nuabandha |
| 49 | Lalita Digal | Chanchedi |
| 50 | Lalji Naik | Gadaguda |
| 51 | Laxmi Dei Digal | Sartaguda |
| 52 | Lenusio Digal | Didrabadi |
| 53 | Lombasandhi Majhi | Durgapanga |
| 54 | Madan Naik | Dakedi |
| 55 | Manoranjan Digal | Sartaguda |
| 56 | Matheyu Nayak | Kanabagiri |
| 57 | Mathu Rupamajhi | Durgapanga |
| 58 | Mayajini Digal | Mandakia |
| 59 | Medha Majhi | Kurtamgarh |

| | | |
|----|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 60 | Meghanad Digal | Sankarakhol |
| 61 | Minaketan Nayak | Midiakia |
| 62 | Minakshee Digal | Murudhipanga |
| 63 | Nageswar Nayak | Kritangia |
| 64 | Niharika Pradhan | Budaguda (Lengersuga) |
| 65 | Nirupama Nayak | Kanjamendi |
| 66 | Nishanta Digal | Loharingia (Petapanga) |
| 67 | Padisti Nayak | Adaskupa |
| 68 | Parikhita Nayak | Tiangia |
| 69 | Pitambar Digal | Gadipadar, Mahasingh |
| 70 | Prafulla Ku Nayak | Barakhama |
| 71 | Priyanka Nayak | Bhaliapada |
| 72 | Priyatama Digal | Sankarakhol |
| 73 | Purendra Mallick | Nilungia |
| 74 | Raghaba Digal | Sisapanga |
| 75 | Raibati Nayak | Musumaha, Dadingia |
| 76 | Rajani Majhi | Kantapoli |
| 77 | Rajesh Digal | Bakingia |
| 78 | Ramani Nayak | Rudangia |
| 79 | Ramesh Chandra Digal | Petapanga |
| 80 | Ramsan Naik | Godabisa |
| 81 | Rasananda Pradhan | Rupagaon |
| 82 | Rebati Parichha | Bondapipilli |
| 83 | Rinima Nayak | Tellingia, G. Udayagiri |
| 84 | Sachikanta Nayak | Dakedi |
| 85 | Samuel Nayak | Bakingia |
| 86 | Santarai Digal | Dagapadar, Tikabali |
| 87 | Sanyasi Majhi | Tumudhibandha (Kandami) |
| 88 | Sarita Deo | Bogadi |
| 89 | Saula Pradhan | Banjamaha |
| 90 | Sibana Pradhan | Sisapanga |
| 91 | Sidheswar Pradhan | Sulesaru (H) |
| 92 | Srikant Mallick | Hattimunda, Tamangi |

| | | |
|-----|-----------------|----------------------|
| 93 | Stepan Nayak | Padrikia (Gumamaha) |
| 94 | Sua Nayak | Budringia (Mandakia) |
| 95 | Subedana Nayak | Ranipada, Gudrikia, |
| 96 | Sunaphul Nayak | Tiangia |
| 97 | Suraj Pradhan | Kharipada |
| 98 | Sushila Deo | Bogadi, Sainpada |
| 99 | Tileswar Nayak | Katama – 2007 |
| 100 | Trinath Digal T | Tiangia – Budidipada |

APPENDIX 2

The following is the full text of statement read out by Sister Meena at the news conference on 25 October 2008 at the Indian Social Institute in New Delhi. Published by Anto Akkara in his book titled *Who Killed Swami Laxmanananda?* (2016).

On 24th August, around 4.30 pm, hearing the shouting of a large crowd, at the gate of Divya Jyoti Pastoral Centre, I ran out through the back door and escaped to the forest along with others. We saw our house going up in flames. Around 8.30 p.m., we came out of the forest and went to the house of a Hindu gentleman who gave us shelter.

On 25th August, around 1.30 p.m., the mob entered the room where I was staying in Prahald's house, one of them slapped me on my face, caught my hair and pulled me out of the house. Two of them were holding my neck to cut off my head. Others told them to take me out to the road, I saw Fr. Thomas Chellan also being taken out and being beaten. The mob consisting of 40–50 men was armed with lathis, axes, spades, crowbars, iron rods, sickles, etc. They took both of us to the main road. Then, they led us to the burnt down Jan Vikas building saying that they were going to throw us into the smoldering fire.

When we reached the Jan Vikas building, they threw us to the verandah on the way to the dinning room, which was full of ashes and broken glass pieces. One of them tore my blouse and others my undergarments. Father Thomas Chellan protested, but they beat him and pulled him out from there. They pulled out my saree, and one of them stepped on my right hand and another on my left hand, and then a third person raped me on the verandah mentioned above. When it was over, I managed to get up and put my petticoat and saree. Another young man whom I can identify caught me and took me to a room near the staircase. He opened his pants and was attempting to rape me when the crowd reached there. One man in the crowd told him not to do any further harm, and so he left me. I will be able to identify the person who raped me and other three persons who stepped on my hands and tore my saree, etc.

I hid myself under the staircase. The crowd was shouting where is that sister, come let us 20 rape her, at least 100 people rape. They found me under the staircase and took me out to the road. There I saw Fr. Chellan was kneeling down, and the crowd was beating him with hands and sticks. They were searching for a rope to tie both of us together to

burn us in fire. Someone suggested to make us parade naked. They made us to walk on the road till Nuagaon market which was half a kilometer from there. They made us to fold our hands and walk. I was with petticoat and saree as they had already torn away my blouse and undergarments. They tried to strip even there, but I resisted and they went on beating me with hands on my cheeks and head and with sticks on my back several times.

When we reached the market place a dozen of OSAP policemen were there. I went to them asking to protect me and I sat in between two policemen, but they did not move. One from the crowd again pulled me out from there, and they wanted to lock us in their temple mandap. The crowd led me and Fr. Thomas Chellan to the Nuagaon block building saying that they will hand us over to BDO. From there along with the block officer, the mob took us to the police outpost, Nuagaon, other police men remained far.

The mob said that they will come back after eating and one of them who attacked me remained back in the police outpost. Policemen then came to police outpost. They were talking very friendly with the man who had attacked me and stayed back. In police outpost, we remained until the inspector in charge of Balliguda with his police team came and took us to Balliguda. They were afraid to take us straight to the police station, and they kept us sometime in jeep in the garage, from there they brought us to the station. The inspector in charge and other two government officers took me privately and asked whatever happened to me. I narrated everything in detail to the police, how I was attacked, raped, taken away from policemen, paraded half-naked and how the police men did not help me when I asked for help while weeping bitterly. I saw the inspector writing down. The inspector asked me "are you interested in filing FIR?" Do you know what will be the consequence? At about 10.00 p.m., I was taken for medical check-up accompanied by a lady police officer to Balliguda Hospital. They were afraid to keep us in police station, saying that the mob may attack police station. So, the police took us to the IB (inspection bungalow) where CRP men were camping.

On 26/08/08 around 9.00 a.m., we were taken to Baliguda Police Station. When I was writing the FIR, the inspector in charge (IIC) asked me to hurry up and not to write in detail. When I started writing about the police, the I.I.C told me this is not the way to write FIR, make it 21 short. So, I rewrote it for the third time in one and half page. I filed the FIR, but I was not given a copy of it.

At around 4.00 p.m., the inspector in charge of Balliguda police station along with some other government officers put us in the OSRTC bus to Bhubaneswar along with other stranded passengers. Police were there till Rangamati where all passengers had their supper. After that, I did not see the police. We got down near Nayagarh and traveled in private vehicle and reached Bhubaneswar around 2.00 a.m. on 27th August.

State police failed to stop the crimes, failed to protect me from the attackers, they were friendly with the attackers, and they tried their best that I did not register an FIR, not make complaints against police, police did not take down my statement as I narrated in detail, and they abandoned me half of the way. I was raped, and now I don't want to be victimized by the Orissa Police. I want C.B.I enquiry. God bless India, God bless you all.

SD/-

Sr. Meena

APPENDIX 3

Interview Question Guide

Interview Questionnaire

Question will be based on the following areas.

To the Christians:

- a). Religious activities of their day-to-day life.
- b). Influence of other religious beliefs.
- c). Regarding local cultures.
- d). Relationship with people of other faiths.
- e). Relationship with leaders in the society.
- f). Opportunity for self-development.
- g). Reason for violence. (Religion, Caste or Tribe, Language, Culture or Economy)
- h). Solution for the problem.

Have to write a letter to the local pastor (CNI) to meet Christians.

To the Hindus:

- a). Religious activity of their day-to-day life.
- b). Relationship with Christians.
- c). Cultural difference with Christians.
- d). Reason for violence. (Religion, Caste or Tribe, Language, Culture or Economy)
- e). Solution for the problem.

Introducing the interview

- a). I am a PhD student, conducting this research for my doctoral dissertation.
- b). Explain to the participants the interest of the research.
- c). Cover ethical issues (informed consent).

- i). Voluntariness
- ii). Permission for recording the interview session.
- iii). Note that data will be used for academic work and publication.
- iv). Confidentiality will be maintained.

The questions:

To the Christians:

There will be a space to mention their gender, educational qualification, caste or tribal identity, traditional or convert Christian, and denomination.

1. How do you identify yourself as a Christian?
2. How people of other faiths will identify you as a Christian?
3. What are the different things adopted in your life as a Christian?
4. How far you are rooted in your local culture?
5. What are the local cultural elements present in your church worship?
6. Why do you reject certain local cultural elements in your life?
7. How far the church is helping you to grow in socio-economic development of the society?
8. Did the church share the resources with others?
9. How do you rate your relationship with your people of other faith neighbour?
10. In what occasions you come together as a community without religious and caste identity?
11. Do you think your Christian identity is hindrance for relating yourself with others? How?
12. As a Christian what do you think of the main reasons for the violence?
13. What was the attitude of your neighbour during the violence?
14. Do you think that if Christians could have done certain things which might have avoided the violence? If yes what are those?
15. Do you think that the function of the church and the leaders of the church need some changes in order that the people of other faith may accept them as they are?
16. Have you decided to change anything in your life after the violent experience?

17. What do you expect from the church in this situation?

To the Hindus:

There will be a space to mention their gender, religion, educational qualification, and caste or tribal identity.

1. What is your religious tradition?
2. What are the religious practices you follow every day?
3. Who taught those practices?
4. Do you know about Christianity?
5. What is your opinion about Christians?
6. What way they are different from you?
7. How is your relationship with Christians?
8. How do you want to see them as Christians?
9. Whom do you think was mainly responsible for the violence? Why?
10. What are the reasons for violence against Christian neighbours?
11. What are your expectations from Christians in your area?
12. What would be the solution for the issue, and how can all religious people live together peacefully?

APPENDIX 4

INTERVIEWS

Taken on 29/10/2016
from Oria

Translated by Fr. Kulakunta

Observed and written in English by Rev. D. Isaac Devadoss

1) Village: **BARAKHAMA**

Population: around 6000

Ethnic groups: Different castes and tribes

Christianity established in 1914 (by Baptist Missionary Society).

Christian population: around 2000

Denominations: 7 (major churches: Church of North India and Roman Catholics)

Violence against Christians in 2007

24 December 2007. There was a rumour spread that Swami was attacked by Christians, so the Hindus started to attack churches, Christian institutions and Christians. While this was going on, a group of Hindu youngsters from Barakhama village attacked the Roman Catholic (RC) Church. One Hindu young man fell down from the roof while trying to pull down the cross. He was injured and taken to the hospital, but he died on the way. So, the Hindu leaders called for a village meeting and declared that the boy was killed by Christians and had a plan to attack Christians and thus the violence started in this village.

Background of the situation

Barakhama is a Hindu-dominated village. Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) leaders often visit this village from the early 1970s and motivate the Hindu youth by their hatred speech to attack Christians. Pavitromon, a Sanskrit teacher, Chittarangen Bindane, a master of martial art, and Dr. Manobunjana Bimsingh, an RSS leader, frequently visited the village. In 2006, there was an RSS meeting presided over by Swami Laxmanananda, held at Rabinga village in which reportedly told them to rape Christian women, torture and kill Christians, destroy churches and Christians' houses. At the end of the meeting, everyone took an oath to follow Swami's instructions by eating rice mixed with goat blood. Many from Barakhama attended that meeting. It was

brought to the attention of the police.

Interviewee 1

A group of three persons

- 1) Thoma Nayak, age 64. Panas, daily wage, Church of North India (CNI), Elder, Fourth-generation Christian.
- 2) Elio Nayak, age 64, Panas, daily wage, CNI, Elder, Fourth-generation Christian.
- 3) Tunakumar Nayak, age 52, Panas, daily wage, CNI, Elder, Fourth-generation Christian.

Thoma Nayak narrated the following, I was taken to a Hindu temple and beaten up by a crowd; they treated me like an animal, performed some rituals on me and forced me to worship their God, but I refused to do so; so, they finally warned me and chased me away. The crowd was mixed caste and tribal group. The high-caste youngsters were so aggressive. I suffered mainly due to my Christian identity. Neither caste nor tribal identify played any role in the violence.

Elio Nayak and Tunakumar Nayak described the violence as follows: On 24 December 2007, the local villagers attacked churches and Christian houses. On 25th of December, people from other villages also joined them with shouting slogans and had a meeting to attack us. Once again, they started to attack the churches and burnt them, and they also attacked Christians' houses. People ran away to the jungle for their lives, taking nothing in their hands. Houses were burnt and destroyed, and properties were looted. On 26th, Govinda Chandra Nayak, aged 60, was murdered suffering a cut in his neck by an axe. Kajara Digal, 65, was beaten up severely. He died after some days. Balarsingh Digal, 62, was also beaten to death. All the Christians stayed in the jungle starving without food and warm clothes for 3 days. A pregnant lady gave birth to a baby boy in the jungle. On 28th, the CRPF came and took us to a relief camp where the tents were made of tarpaulin. No other facilities were provided, except for food. After two months, everyone returned to their destroyed homes. The government gave a sum of Rs. 50,000 for fully damaged houses and Rs. 20,000 for partially damaged houses. When they started to rebuild their houses, the local Hindus did not allow them to take wood from the forest; bricks, cement and other construction materials were not sold to them; if they were sold, the cost was three times more than the usual price. Masons from other communities were not willing to work for Christians.

Interviewee 2

Name: Manoj Kumar Digal, age 42, shop keeper, First-generation Christian, converted by his elder brother.

On 25 December 2007, a group of local people came and destroyed the house and looted the grocery shop. Manoj and his wife ran with their two small children and took refuge in the school campus for two days and then came back after the CRPF assured them protection. The local police was there at the time of that incident; we approached them, but they asked us to run away somewhere because they were less in number and helpless.

Violence against Christians in 2008

Background of the situation

Swamiji was killed on 23 August 2008. The RSS spread the news that he was killed by Christians. So, they planned to attack Christian churches, institutions and people. In order to instigate violence against Christians, they took Swami's body for a procession and followed a longer route which took two long days to reach the burial place. On the way, they attacked Christian churches, institutions and people.

Interviewee 3

Karthik Nayak, age 29, teacher, RC, active leader of the Christian community in Barakhama.

On 26 August 2008, Barakhama village Hindus had a meeting to attack Christians and had a procession, raising slogans like Jai Ram and Jai Bharath Matha; they warned the Christians through a microphone saying, "Convert to Hinduism or leave the village". Two of the Christians went to the police station and made a complaint about the recent development; they were assured protection. This time, all the Christians decided not to run away because even if we ran away, we were followed and killed. So, they all gathered in one house and hid. At first, the mob attacked the churches and came to know the place where the Christians were hiding. They all came with local guns and axes. When we heard the sound nearing our hiding place, we tried to escape from the house; at that time, Ajob Digal, 22, was shot and died. We also retaliated by throwing some crude bombs, so the mob went back without causing any further damage to us. Praful Kumar Nayak, 55, one of the two persons who went to the police station the

previous day to ask for protection, was beaten to death. Miss. Manini Digal, 22, who was at home in the other side of the village, was raped and burnt alive, but she survived with wounds. In the meantime, more police arrived in the village, and the situation was controlled.

Karthik being an educated man was actively involved in protecting his community. After the riots, the government formed a peace committee. Karthik was one of the members from the Christian side and spoke boldly against the Hindus, so the Hindus filed a false case against him, and for that, he was imprisoned for 63 days. He even received life threat while he was still in the prison. He had a lot of Hindu friends who also insisted him to join the RSS. The good Hindu friends couldn't talk in favour of Christians because they would be tortured too. Religious identity was superseding everything.

Every year 26th of August is celebrated as Martyr's day by all Christians in Kandhamal.

Taken on 30/10/16

2) Place: **KANJAMENDI**

Population: around 6000

Ethnic groups: Different castes and tribes

Christianity established in the 1930s

Christians: around 1800

Denominations: 3

Interviewees 4

Name: Mrs. Karmila Nayak, age 42, RC Christian.

Mrs. Louisa Singh, age 60, RC Christian.

On 25 August 2008, about 3 p.m., Swamiji's body came to Kanjamendi. The vehicle was stopped in front of the RC Church, and the mob began vandalising the church and damaged it. All the Christians ran into the jungle; we stayed in the jungle during the day, and in the homes of the Hindus who lived nearby during the night. Many time our children were crying for food. We starved in the jungle and stayed for a week; in the meantime, our houses were looted, and the furniture were damaged and burnt. We went to the camp where there was no sanitation, no privacy for women, no warm cloths and

no proper shelter. After two days, there was a rumour that there was poison mixed in the food, so we moved to Taringbody camp and stayed there for a few months. Then, we came back home. We didn't receive any compensation because our family stayed in a rented house. Some Christian non-governmental organisations (NGOs) gave us basic things for kitchen use. We moved to another rented house.

Interviewee 5

Name: Mrs. Susila Digal, age 45, RC Christian.

Jubalraj Digal, 40, husband of Susila, was a civil contractor who lived with her and their two children at Kanjamendi in Nuagaon Block. My husband was actively involved in the peace committee after the August 2008 riots. He thought that there was normalcy in his area. So, as a contractor, he went by bike with his second son Vidyadhar Digal, 13, to Sithabanga, a neighbouring village on 16 December 2008. While returning, around 5 p.m. a group of people stopped them and began to beat them; our son got severely hit on his face in spite of wearing a helmet. He managed to escape and climbed up a tree and stayed there until the darkness. In the meantime, his father Jubalraj Digal was taken to the riverside. They beat him to death and burnt the body on a rock which was in the middle of the river. My son got down from the tree at the night, ran to Udayagiri police station and made a complaint. He was admitted in the hospital and treated for two months. Police went to Sithabanga and enquired, but they couldn't get any evidence of his body because they burnt the body and flushed it in the river. The following day they got a burnt rosary, and with that, the police confirmed the death of Jubalraj Digal.

Taken on 04/11/16

Interviewee 6

Name: Kumuda Kumar Nayak, 40, Pentecost, Jana Vikas staff.

On 24 August 2008, Mr. Lal Nayak, a Christian, was caught by the police at the outpost of K. Nuagam and interrogated regarding Swami's murder. At that time, a group of local Hindus gathered and plotted the attack on the Jana Vikas, a social wing of the RC Church, and Divya Jyoti Pastoral Centre run by Catholic Church. They started to attack Jana Vikas around 1 p.m.; after burning 25 motorcycles, 2 four wheelers and all the articles and furniture, they moved to the Pastoral Centre, burnt and damaged everything including a four wheeler. They brought petrol and other weapons from another village.

On 25th morning, they attacked Christian houses, looted, damaged and burnt them. I had two shops; they demolished those and fired it. On 24th and 25th, there was fire and smoke everywhere in Kanjamendi, and people were running for their life. On 25th morning, around 9 o'clock Fr. Chellan and Sister Meena were caught, beaten up, and made half-naked, and the Sister was gang-raped at Jana Vikas in public. We were in the jungle for four days, and our local Hindu friends supplied food in the jungle. After that, with the help of the CRPF, we moved to the camp; from there, my family went to my relative's house and stayed there till December 2008. When we came back, nothing was left at home, so we rebuilt our house and settled again. Many of the goons were arrested and put into jail. Other Hindu friends showed their regret for the happenings. Now, we are fine with everyone. Jana Vikas renovation started after 2 years, and the office resumed in 2011.

Taken on 31/10/16

3) Place: **TIANGIA**

Population: around 8000

Ethnic groups: Konds and Panas

Christianity established in 1936

Christians: around 3500

Denominations: 4

Village Background

Among the 3500 Christians, only 70 of them are from the Konds. Both the communities are living together. Christian Konds are closer to Christian Panas than their Hindu counterparts. They celebrate festivals together but don't eat together. Though it is an interior place, Swami visited a temple here several times and introduced some Hindu rituals and festivals to the majority Hindu Konds and instigated them to attack and kill Christians. Here, he cleverly played the divide between the tribes and Dalits. During the violence, local tribal Hindus attacked Dalit Christians. Before 25 August 2008, there was no problem among the people.

Interviewee 7

Name: Anacleta Nayak, 67, Second-generation RC Christian – his son is an RC priest, stays alone, living in a concrete house.

On 25 August 2008 morning, I went for worship and heard about Swami's death. Everyone decided to pray and stay at our homes. But in the afternoon, I heard that three Christians were already killed in our village. So, the other Christians were running to the jungle. I also locked my house and ran to the jungle. We were in the jungle for four days, eating leaves and drinking water. Four days later, because of hunger, I came back home. My house was opened, looted, damaged and all the furniture burnt. I stayed at home that night. Hindus came to know that I came back; they came in the morning and took me to the temple. There were another 10–12 Christians brought by them; they told me that if I refused to accept Hinduism, they would kill me. I told them that if they did not kill people I would be with you. Then, they performed some rituals for us and gave us some advice from Ramayana, and then they declared us as Hindus. They asked us to give our willingness in writings; we did as we were told. The next day the CRPF came and set the local camp and asked all the Christians to go to the camp. I also went to the camp and stayed there for more than 6 months, and then I came back home. Now, I am a Christian. Now, we have no problem. We live with fear, but we won't run away from our home. We are ready to face the situation.

Interviewee 8

Name: Mrs. Amona Nayak, W/o Vibin Nayak, 45, RC, daily wage.

On 25 August 2008, around 11 a.m., a mob came with weapons like axe, sword, iron rods and wooden staff. They attacked the Believers' Church and then entered the streets breaking houses and shouting slogans. Vikram Nayak, my brother-in-law was inside the house. Vikram was a civil contractor cum kerosene dealer. The mob attacked Vikram's house and broke open the door. Vikram was trying to escape by climbing up the roof, but he was pulled down by the mob. He was beaten up; he had a severe head injury, his left leg was broken, and right leg had an injury; he was bleeding from the gash on his head and leg. The mob used his kerosene to burn his house and motorbike. Vikram was lying in a corner. I gave him water and I witnessed the whole incident. The next day (26th) evening police came and took him to the hospital at Raikia which is 15 km away. The following day (27th) he died in the hospital. After the post-mortem, the body was buried in Raikia. Later, his wife got a sum of Rs. 5 lakh as compensation.

From 27th onwards, police insisted that all Christians should go to the Raikia camp. So, we all went there, and we were compelled to live in the camp which had no basic facilities. We lived there for a few months and came back to our village to rebuild our houses. The government gave Rs. 50,000 for fully damaged and Rs. 20,000 for partially damaged houses. Our children's education was affected, and we lost everything.

The local MLA Manon Pradhan was involved in all these atrocities. No one was punished because the witnesses were threatened.

Interviewees 9

Name: Mrs. Jambothi Digal, 62, widow of Trinnatha Digal.

Mrs. Mariamai Nayak, 30, W/o Samuel Nayak.

On 25 August 2008, a mob came around 3 p.m. with weapons and shouting slogans. My husband Trinnatha Digal was countering the mob by shouting at them. They pushed him away and stoned him to death. His body was lying there till 28 August; police came and arranged for post-mortem at Raikia. After the post-mortem, the body was buried at Raikia. In the meantime, all the Christians ran to jungle. Our houses were looted and destroyed. On 29th, everyone went to Raikia camp, stayed there for a year and returned home. As a compensation for my husband's death, I received Rs 5 lakh and Rs 50,000 for the damage of our house. I rebuilt the house and is living alone; I have no children.

Interviewees 10

Name: Mrs. Sournalatha Nayak, 35, W/o. Mr. Khaleswer Digal, 40.

Mrs. Lodu Digal, 60, Second-generation Christian, Believers' Church, daily wage.

On 25 August 2008, she went to the forest and stayed there for a week, and then went to Raikia camp where she delivered a child. She was in the hospital for 14 days, and then they brought her back to the camp. They were in Raikia camp for 9 months, and then moved to Udaygiri camp and lived there for 6 months, then moved to Tiangia camp and lived there for another 7 months. Then, they returned home; their house was looted, and things were burnt. They received a partial compensation of Rs.20000.

On 27 August, Parikhitha Nayak took his wife and child by bicycle to the nearby village where his relatives were staying. While he was nearing the village called Gumandi, a group of people stopped him, they attacked him and dragged into the river leaving the wife and child, and they killed him and cut his body into pieces. The next day the police

had taken the body for post-mortem and buried at Raikia. His wife received a compensation of Rs 5 lakh.

Interviewee 11

Name: Ranjith Nayak, 47, RC, Third-generation Christian.

On 25 August 2008, Suresh Nayak came from the other side of the village, with a bleeding head and told us that churches were damaged and a mob was attacking Christians, so we better run away from here. We all ran to the jungle; the mob came and broke the RC churches (old and new). The following day (26th) they came to the streets and attacked the houses, looted and burnt them. On 29 August, we all went to Raikia camp from jungle. We stayed in the camp till May 2009 and came back to the village. We rebuilt the houses and resettled. We received a compensation of Rs 20,000/50,000 from the government.

Ranjith Nayak's brother is an RC priest. His two daughters were under training for Sisterhood, and his younger son wanted to become priest because during the violence, he was critically ill, no medical facility was there, and they couldn't even move out. In that situation, they saw water coming from the broken statue of Mother Mary and gave that water to the boy. He got the healing and survived, so the young boy wanted to serve as a priest.

Taken on 01/11/16

4) Village: **SIBAJU**

Population: around 60 families, all Baptist Christians, all Panas.

Interviewee 12

Name: Vishwanath Digal, 65, farmer, Baptist, third generation.

Sumantho Digal, 32, farmer, Baptist, fourth generation.

This Christian village is situated in the interior forest area. The villagers were not aware of the happenings outside the village. On 26 August 2008, around 10 a.m., a group of people came to our village shouting slogans (Jai Ram) and carrying weapons; they started to attack the houses. The mob was so big and violent, so we all ran to the jungle. They looted our valuables and then destroyed the houses and burnt it till 4 p.m. Our cattle and paddy fields were looted. We all went to the camp at Udayagiri and then

moved to different camps; we finally returned to our village in September 2010. Our houses were rebuilt with the help of the compensation amount of Rs 30,000/70,000. Churches like Vishvawani and Believers' also helped to build our homes and the church.

A peace committee was formed, and they requested the collector to give electricity and proper road to the village. We have received electricity, but haven't received our roads yet. Now, we are not in fear; even if something happens in future, we won't run away from our village.

Taken on 01/11/16

5) Village: DODINGIA

Population: 1700

Ethnic groups: Caste and tribes

Christianity established in the 1930s

Christian population: around 300 (Panas 240 and Konds 60)

Denominations: 4 (RC, Baptist, CNI, Pentecost)

Background of the village

Christians are living among the Hindus. It was peaceful till 24 August 2008. As a village, they all had participated in household ceremonies such as marriage and death. But the Konds wouldn't eat if the food was cooked by the Panas, particularly on the eve of *mada* (ceremony after the burial). Social discrimination was less among the Christians. Swami used to come and give inflammatory speech against the Christians.

Interviewee 13

Name: Pastor. Subash Kumar Digal, 39, Pastor of a Pentecostal Church.

Mr. Sunil Nayak, 40, daily wage.

On 24 August 2008, around 9 p.m., a group of high-caste men came with petrol and weapons, and the local Hindu Panas and Konds joined them (around 300), and shouted slogans 'Jai Ram' and 'Jai Bajranga Vali', and attacked, looted and burnt Christian houses. Everyone ran away to the jungle and stayed there for 3 days, surviving only by water and leaves. Two women delivered their babies in the jungle. On 26th and 27th,

again the mob came to the village and demolished the churches and declared that they would first kill the priest and leaders of the church. They announced that anyone who killed a priest would get Rs. 500,000.

On the fourth day, all Christians went to Raikia camp with police protection and stayed in the camp for one year. There was no sanitation, no proper food, no proper shelter and no medical facilities. Two of the elderly persons died in the camp, and two ladies gave birth to babies in this situation. After a year, we returned to the village; our houses were burned down, and our agricultural land was taken by others. We all stayed together in one place, living in the camp under police protection for one year. Several peace talks had been initiated by officials, but there was no positive progress. The Hindus put a lot of restrictions on us as well as on their own people. So, we requested the subcollector to give us land for settlement outside the village. Considering the situation, he agreed and allotted a place for 27 houses to be built. We got a compensation of Rs. 50,000 from the government. With that money and the help of Barnabas Funds, an NGO from Delhi, we built our houses in the new place and named it Ambethkar Nagar. The government registered the land in our names and gave electricity connections. Christian NGOs helped us to have two bore wells and one tube well. Some Christian families rebuilt their houses in their own places and remained in the village. Churches in the village were rebuilt with the help of outside Christians. In this new village, we have a house church for our worship. Now, we have peace but don't trust each other.

6) Village: **SIBAPANGA**

Population: 800 (143 families)

Ethnic groups: Panas and Konds

Christianity established in the 1930s

Christian population: around 200 (43 families) (Panas 25 fly. and Konds 18 fly.)

Denominations: all are Roman Catholics

Background of the village

Christians and Hindus lived harmoniously together. Swami visited this village several times and gave inflammatory speeches against the Christians.

Interviewees 14

Names: Elias Digal, 40, farmer.

Francis Digal, 49, farmer.

Zacharias Digal, 46, farmer.

In the year 1996, the church was attacked and demolished. A case was filed, and then later a new church was built. The government sanctioned an amount for constructing a community hall, but the Hindus built a Hindu temple with that money in front of the church.

On 25 August 2008, Sibin Pradhan, aged 35, a Christian went to a Hindu's house for a funeral. After the funeral, they drank together. Then, Sibin was killed and cut into four pieces and left half burnt. His body was found after a week; the police took his body for post-mortem, and he was buried at Raikia. His wife Anitha Pradhan was left with three children and received a compensation of Rs 5 lakh from the government.

On the same day, 9 a.m., a big mob of around 200 people came from outside with axes, swords, petrol and local guns, shouting slogans, and attacked houses. Five houses were looted, damaged and burnt. All Christians ran away to the jungle. Thirteen families went back to their homes, and the others went to the Raikia camp.

On 30 August, the mob came again and vandalised and demolished the houses completely and burnt it. In the meantime, they caught all these 13 family members and threatened them to convert to Hinduism or else they would be killed. Considering the situation, they agreed. Some Hindu ceremonies were performed. They were asked to burn the Bible and urinate on them. They were asked to join with the mob for demolishing the houses and the church. These 13 families returned to Christianity after the crisis period.

On 5 September, two CRPF policemen came to the village while patrolling the area. The Hindus caught one policeman and killed him, and the other one escaped. The villagers thought that the CRPF was guarding the Christians.

The people stayed in the camp for 7 months. Mr. Saony Digal, aged 75, died in the camp. We returned to the village in the month of March 2009, rebuilt the houses with the help of the government's compensation of Rs. 50,000/ and the Christians from outside. The government also gave us utensils. We started to cultivate our land and resettled. The church was rebuilt by the diocese. Three families shifted to some other

place. There is no fear now, but we lost our close community life.

7) Village: **BETTICOLA**

Population: 800 (150 families)

Ethnic groups: Panas and Konds

Christianity established in the 1930s

Christian population: around 300 (70 families) (Panas 45 fly. and Konds 25 fly.)

Denominations: Roman Catholics and Baptist

Background of the village

Hindus and Christians lived together with a good social life. There was no communal problem before August 2008. Swami used to come to the village for Hindu's function and gave a few inflammatory speeches.

Interviewee 15

Name: Krisanth Mullick, 65, RC, Kond.

On 25 August 2008, a group of outside and the local Hindus came with weapons shouting slogans and attacked the churches. We were all terrified by that incident and ran to the forest, and stayed there for three days. In the meantime, they looted our houses, demolished and burnt everything. On the 28th, the police came and rescued us from forest and kept us in the high school campus at Udaygiri. The attackers tried to poison the water in the camp twice. Many left the camp for different places. We went to the camp in Cuttack and stayed there for one year; from there, we moved to Jala camp, from the Jala camp to Udaygiri again, and then to Tikavalli camp. There was a peace committee formed by the subcollector, BDO and tahsildar; in that meeting, the Hindus strongly told us that if we wanted to stay in our village we had to be a Hindu. The officials tried to convince them through various meetings, but they failed. Finally, the subcollector offered a land for us to settle. There was a big agitation from the Hindus for allotting the land for us. Our agricultural land had been taken by the Hindus. We ran away with the clothes we were wearing, and we lost everything.

We got a compensation of Rs.50,000 from the government. The Believers' Church came forward to build houses for us. We gave them our compensation amount of Rs.50,000/, and they built us these small houses. There are 67 houses in this new village,

and 50 families from Betticola. We earn through making leaf plates. This new colony is called Nandagiri. RC and Believers' Churches are here for worship.

Interviewee 16

Name: Mrs. Pushpanjali Panda, 42, Brahmin, teacher.

W/o Pastor. Dibysingh Digal, 48, Panas, Baptist.

Dibysingh Digal was from Sibaju village, and he married a Brahmin Pushpanjali Panda. They have one daughter, Monalisa, aged 17. They were staying at Raikia. Dibysingh Digal was a pastor in the Baptist Church at Trepanga. My husband was a Baptist pastor, he conducted a worship service at Trepanga village on 25 August 2008. He stayed at Trepanga that night because I cautioned him not to come back home to Raika. But around 9 pm, a group of Hindu activists dragged him out of the house and attacked him with an iron rod and other weapons. He was killed and thrown into the river. I went to Trepanga with my nine-year-old daughter Monalisa the next morning to collect my husband's body. Meanwhile, police took the body and sent it to Raika for post-mortem. After post-mortem, the body was brought back to Trepanga and buried. Since there was no safety for my daughter, I sent her to Punjab to study in a Catholic convent.

8) Village: **BAKINGIA**

Population: 1200 (300 families)

Ethnic groups: Panas and Konds

Christianity established in the 1910s

Christian population: around 500 (120 families) (Panas 70 fly. and Konds 50 fly.)

Denominations: Roman Catholics, Baptist and CNI

Background of the village

People from different communities and religious traditions live together. There was no tension till December 2007. There was a rumour spread around that Swami was attacked by Christians, so some local Hindus attacked one Christian house. Swami was a frequent visitor of this village.

Interviewees 17

Names: Mrs. Kadampula Nayak, 50.

W/o Late Pastor Samuel Nayak, 52.

Rev. Padmanaba Pradhan, 47, CNI.

Mrs. Sarapathi Nayak, 55.

Mr. Simon Nayak, 55.

Mr. Jiram Pradhan, 57.

On 26 August 2008, around 11 am a mob with weapons entered our Bakingia village and demolished the Catholic and Baptist churches. They began to attack the Christian houses. My husband Pastor Samuel Nayak, a well-known gospel preacher in Kandhamal. I, my husband Pastor Samuel Nayak and his mother Janamati Nayak were praying inside the house. My husband was holding the Bible to his chest. The mob broke open the door while we were kneeling and praying. They caught my husband and started beating him, and asked him if he would become a Hindu. When he refused, they broke his leg with an iron rod and asked him to tear the Bible. When he refused to do so, they cut his other leg with an axe. They gave him a final warning and asked him to urinate on the Bible. On his refusal to do so, they chopped off his head with an axe. He let out a loud cry and fell to the ground in a pool of blood. His mother was 70 years old, unable to see properly when she heard all the noise and her son's final screaming she shouted at the crowd. They pulled her down along with my husband and poured petrol on them and burnt her alive, along with her son's body. I was beaten and pushed away. The remains of the bodies were lying in the house for two days. On the third day, the local Hindus took the body and burnt it. No post-mortem was done, but a case was filed. I was given a compensation of Rs. 500,000 by the government. After this incident, all Christians from this village ran to the jungle and resided there for 4 days, and subsequently went to the Raikia camp and moved on to the Mondakia camp. We returned to our village after a year and resettled with the help of a compensation from the government, and the churches were rebuilt. Peace committees were formed; now we are living without fear. We live and die for Christ.

Interviewee 18

Name: Malathi Pradhan, 35, RC.

She left her home on 26 August to Raikia Camp. Her Hindu neighbour kept her valuables and wished her for her safety. After 6 months, she came back home; her house

was looted, and her goats were taken by the Hindus. She wanted to collect the paddy which was ready for harvest. But the Hindus objected and asked her to give it in writing that she was harvesting her own paddy. She was willing to give the letter provided they give a copy of it, but the Hindus were not willing to give her a copy, so she refused and with the help of the Hindu neighbour, she harvested the paddy.

Taken on 02/11/16

Village: **KANJAMENDI**

Interviewee – 19

Hindu leaders of the village

Mr. Soroj Mallick, 47, Hindu, Kond, Mutha (Head of 17 villages).

Mr. Sanira Pradhan, 40, Hindu, Kond.

Mr. Kasindra Pradhan, 62, Retired EO, Hindu, Kond.

Mr. Pramod Mallick, 35, Hindu, Kond, wife Mrs. Anita Mallick is a Panchayat President.

On 23 August 2008, our guru Swami was killed, and we were all very angry when we heard that. We have an RSS link with our Kui Samaj, and we received the message that Swami was killed, his private part was cut and his neck was cut by an axe, the woman who died along with him was raped and her private parts were damaged. After hearing the way he was killed, it increased our anger. The RSS wanted to kill Christian Fathers, Nuns and Pastors in the same manner. There was a proper plan given by our leaders.

We believed that Christians killed Swami because in the year 2007, there were several attempts to attack him in different villages by Christians. So, we had some disturbance during that time. The media was also portraying that the Christians were the cause for his death.

Though we are the prominent local Hindus, we were not part of the riot nor do we have control over the mob. The mob consisted of nonlocals and was very aggressive. In the recent past, the caste division increased, and that is also one of the prime reasons for the formation of the riot.

We know what the Christian Fathers and Sisters are doing; we studied in a Christian school, so we know what you teach. We deeply regret for the incidents, and we know

how much damage we have caused. We will now try to work together for our village development.

Taken by 03/11/16

Interviewee 20

Name: Fr. Cassian Pradhan, 42, Kond, Regional Coordinator of Basic Christian Community.

Joined 14 June 2008 and from then stayed in the Pastoral Centre, during the time of the 2008 violence. He is from the village of Bakingia, Kandhamal.

On 23 August 2008, we got to know through television channel that Swami was killed. Myself, Fr. Chellan and Sister Meena were in the Pastoral Centre. We were following the news, and some Hindu friends called me and I was informed about the situation. On the night of 24th, the media began to give the data of the previous incidents where Swami was attacked by Christians and brought the possible conclusion that Swami must have been killed by Christians. They showed the RSS leaders expressing their anger on Christians, and some Churches were already attacked. Watching the news, we understood that they would target our centre too. I urged Fr. Chellan to take precautions to save our life. We were terrified. The next day, 25th Sunday morning we wanted to go to the church for mass as usual wearing our cassock, but when I stepped out the campus, a Hindu friend shouted, "Father don't go, the situation is not good outside", so we came back to the centre and had mass inside chapel.

After lunch, we saved certain documents and valuables inside the generator room. I received a call from a Hindu friend saying that people from outside came to the market area by two trucks and they were gathering local people by giving inflammatory speeches and were accusing the Pastoral Centre as the murder of Swami. So he asked us to escape from there, saying that the group was coming to attack the centre. We were thinking what to do where to hide, but within 15 minutes (around 1:30 p.m.), we heard the sound of people shouting and breaking the Jana Vikas building which was very near to the centre. I went and locked the main gates and the inner gates, and we ran behind our building trying to climb upon 6–7 feet wall and run to the other side. I climbed it, so that I could pull up Sister Meena and ask her to jump to the other side. But Fr. Chellan was an old fatty man, he couldn't climb up, and I couldn't pull him up either. I climbed down and put a log towards the wall and asked him to climb up and I pulled him up.

This entire operation nearly took 15 minutes. In the meantime, the mob came to the centre searching for us; they came behind the building and were searching in the bushes; we saw them while we were struggling to climb up the wall, but they did not see us. I encouraged Fr. Chellan to jump down from the wall because he was hesitant, as there were stones and bushes. We managed to jump safely and ran to the jungle and hid.

The centre was damaged, and everything was burnt; they pulled our jeep from the garage and burnt it; we saw the smoke coming up from everywhere. In the meantime, Swami's body came in front of the centre around 3 p.m.; again, they enter the centre and damaged things. It was raining that evening, so we moved to a Hindu's house for shelter at 10:30 p.m.; Fr. Chellan and Sister Meena stayed in that house. Another two Fathers, Fr. Prabodh Pradhan and Fr. Lakshmikant Pradhan, escaped from Balliguda and joined us, so myself and the two Fathers stayed in my Christian relative's house.

On 26th morning, the local goons started to attack and loot the Christian houses and churches. The mob came to know the hiding house of Fr. Chellan and Sister Meena. Morning around 9 a.m., I wanted to meet Fr. Chellan and the Sister; while going, the mob saw me and shouted 'Father is here', so I and the other two Fathers ran to the high hill. In the meantime, the mob enquiring the house owner about Fr. Chellan and the Sister. The Hindu owner said they came at night and left by morning. But they did not believe them. Sister Meena was wearing a saree like a local old lady; when they asked about her, the lady of the house said that Sister was her relative who had come to visit. Fr. Chellan was locked up in a room. So, they couldn't find him, but again and again the goons insisted that they were in that house only. So, the mob poured kerosene around the house and told the owner that if he didn't show them where they were hiding, they would burn his house; while this was going on, Fr. Chellan's mobile phone was ringing and he attended the call. Hearing his voice coming from the locked room, they broke the door, found him, dragged him out and beat him up. They entered the house, pulled out Sister Meena, stripped her half-naked and dragged them to Jana Vikas. There, they forced Fr. Chellan to rape the Sister, but he refused, so they beat him up and stripped him naked. Sister was beaten and gang-raped. Then, they brought them to the market place and tied them on a pillar in front of the temple to burn them alive.

One of my Hindu friends called me and told about Fr. Chellan and Sister's situation. I immediately called the friends in Bhubaneswar (Capital of Odisha) and asked them to act to rescue these two. They contacted higher officials, and they pushed the Balliguda

police to act. So, Balliguda police came, rescued them and brought them to the police station. (Rest narrated by the Sister in Akkara's book.)

Around 3 p.m., we heard people's voice, searching for us in the hills. We didn't know what to do; we knelt down together and prayed for God's help, and immediately there was a heavy rain for an hour. The goons had gone back because of the rain. We walked through the forest for about 10 k.m., reached Lethinga village at 9 p.m. Our cell phone's charge was gone, so we couldn't communicate with anyone anymore. We thought of staying in that village, but that was sensed by the RSS and the local Hindus who planned to kill us, so we had our dinner and left the village and climbed the mountain. The village believers also came with us, but we told them to return to their homes. We reached another village, there was only one RC Christian house in that village, and we went there and thought of staying there. The village was a Kui village; one person saw us and informed the villagers that three Christians who killed the Swami had come to their village. All the Hindus came with all kinds of weapons and called us out and enquired us for two hours in Kui; fortunately, all three of us were *Kuis*, so we clarified their queries and finally they allowed us to go. While going Jacob Pradhan, a Christian, came with us to show the way. When he returned, he saw that his house was demolished because the person who informed the villagers about these Fathers' arrival forgot to tell them that they were Fathers. After we left the village, he told them that they were Fathers, so they got angry and beat him up, and they were angry with Jacob's family as well, so they destroyed the house. When Jacob reached the village, he was beaten up, his legs were broken and they chased them out of the village.

On our way we were stuck, and we lost the way, so again we knelt down and prayed. Now, we could hear some people's voice, so we walked towards that voice and then reached a small road. Then, we further walked for two days, reached Fr. Prabodh's village, and had food, but the situation was not good there, so we stayed in the forest for 2 days; we only received food from home. Then, we further walked down for two days and reached Taringbody where Missionary of Charity Sisters rescued us and took us to Berhampur; from there, we went to Bhubaneswar. After six months, we came back to Kanjamendi.

9) Village: **BALLIGUDA**

Population: 30,000

Ethnic groups: All caste and tribal communities

Christianity established in the 1930s

Christian population: around 500 (120 families) (Panas 70 fly. and Konds 50 fly.)

Denominations: Roman Catholics, Baptist and CNI

Background of the village

Balliguda is one of the largest towns in Kandhamal District where there are police station, colleges, schools, convents, seminary, churches, banks, government offices and big market place. Though tribal people are more in number, the town is dominated and controlled by high-caste business people who migrated from the plains. The RSS has its strong base in this town; it is an RSS centre for the region.

Interviewee 21

Name: Sis. Christa, 60, Carmelite Order, from Kerala, Convent Superior.

On the evening of 24 December 2007, we, some youth and one Sister, were decorating the church; suddenly, the boys told us that we are going because RSS people were planning to attack the church. I, the Sister and another boy were left in the church. Around 7 p.m., a group of people came and destroyed the outside decorations and left. We immediately locked the gates and church door. Three of us were hiding in the vestry. We thought they won't come inside the church, but they broke open the church door and entered in shouting and damaging things, desecrated the holy altar and set fire. We ran out through the back door to the seminary and climbed up the terrace; we saw a huge fire in the convent campus; the mob entered the seminary and began to destroy and burn everything. We three entered a small vestry of the chapel; they set fire everywhere, and there was too much smoke inside the chapel, so they couldn't see the door or window of the vestry. We were suffocated; I thought we would die in that room, and we lost our hope and energy. I had my mobile and switched on the light, and then we saw the window above near the roof; the boy opened it, and all three of us put our faces outside and breathed. Later, we found that except that window all other windows were broken and threw into fire. Around 12 o'clock at night, some students were calling us 'sister, sister'. I could recognise their voice; they were seminarians so we shouted back saying 'we are alive, come and put off the fire'. They brought buckets of water and put off the fire and reached us. We collapsed; they carried us with much joy to the

convent side.

I was very much worried about the Sisters and girls in the convent: six of them hid under the staircase. After burning everything, they left the convent; in the meantime, two Sisters and the four girls jumped over the wall and escaped. There was a local girl who took them to her house. Later, I also joined them.

I was here from 1986; there was no problem. Once in 1988, one of our school boys asked for a computer course completion certificate without completing the course. I refused to give him, so he told me, "I am an RSS man, you Christians will be chased away". The RSS advised the parents not to send their children to Christian schools, but they replied, "Education and medical has no religion, we prefer to go to the best".

We renovated the convent by the end of July 2008 and reopened in 1 August 2008.

On 23 August 2008, I and two other girls were on the way back to Balliguda by taxi; we received a phone call saying that Swami was killed, so don't come here, and advised us to go to Chatrapur Convent which is 200 km away from our place. My driver was an RSS man, so I kept quiet; after five minutes, the driver received a call, and he was looking at me differently. Then, I asked him what happened; he said, "Swami was not good, let him die he is not a good person but you are good so I will not take you to Balliguda". Then, we decided to go to Chatrapur Convent so went to get petrol for our vehicle, but there was no petrol in two stations. Finally, we got petrol in another station and reached Chatrapur Convent with much difficulty after six hours of travel.

But here in Balliguda, Sisters ran to the jungle on 23 August 2008, stayed there for two days, and after that the CRPF took them to camp. This time there was less damage to the convent.

APPENDIX 5

Ethical clearance certificate



08 April 2016

Reverend ID Devairakkam 21508193
School of Religion, Philosophy & Classics
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Reverend Devairakkam

Protocol reference number: HSS/0293/016D

Project title: Christian Identity, Hindu Nationalism and Religious Violence in India with Special Reference to Kandhamal, Odisha, (1985 – 2010).

Expedited Approval

In response to your application dated 22 March 2016, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/px

cc Supervisor: Prof. Philippe Denis
cc Academic Leader Research: Prof. Rodewick Hewitt
cc School Administrator: Mrs Catherine Murugan

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Founding Campuses: Edgewood, Howick College, Medical School, Pietermaritzburg, Westville

**CHRISTIAN IDENTITY, HINDU NATIONALISM AND
RELIGIOUS COMMUNAL VIOLENCE IN INDIA WITH
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KANDHAMAL, ODISHA
(1985–2010)**

By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to understand why Indian Christian identity became a problem in the secular

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