

ABSTRACT

KANDHAMAL RIOT 2008: ITS IMPACT ON CURRENT AND FUTURE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

by

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This study analyzed the Christian Church in Kandhamal following the 2008 riot against Christians with recommendations for the restoration of the church. Though riots and persecution against Christians are frequent in India, the 2008 riot was one of the worst riots that India has ever witnessed. This persecution came in the form of riots and impacted more than an individual or a single village; it claimed over 100 lives. People were also paraded naked; properties were looted and burned; shrines were established in Christian worship centers, and several cases of sexual abuse were reported. Over 600 Christian villages were attacked destroying or burning 5600 houses. Approximately 54,000 people were left homeless, and 295 churches and worship centers were destroyed. Dozens of schools, colleges, and educational institutions were also destroyed and burnt. Finally, some people were falsely accused and put into prison as the culprits of Swami's assassination.

Despite these incidents, the government remained a spectator. The media represented the events falsely and accused Christians as the root cause, which brought a media trial against Christians. The media bias caused further restlessness and innocent Christians became victims. As a result, the believers were dispersed. Some of them returned to the village as the situation calmed down, but some did not return due to the fear of threats from village Hindu fanatics. This caused the church to destabilize and most of the churches ceased normal functioning.

This research looked at the status of the church and how to help it resume normal functioning. The study was divided among two groups of people: Kandhamal Christian leaders, including pastors, missionaries, evangelists, lay leaders, and organization directors, and the believers who were the prime victims of the 2008 riot. Though pandemic restrictions limited the research, the researcher was able to reach out to 28 Christian leaders and 29 believers who shared their opinions about the riot and how the church can be helped amid such riots today and in future if there are any.

Assessing the opinions he gathered, the researcher has come up with six key challenges that Kandhamal churches should consider. The research also provided at least eight recommendations for both the Christian leaders and the believers to have a healthy and sound Christian community. The church should consider the proposed recommendations and take active steps as soon as possible to face such incidents with boldness and never breakdown amid such riots.

**Kandhamal Riot 2008:
Its Impact on Current and Future Christian Community**

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by

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CHAPTER 1

NATURE OF THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter provides a backdrop for the proposed project. The goal is to determine the needs of the Kandhamal churches for their restoration. This chapter outlines the purpose of the research and how to obtain the data needed to support it. This chapter also examines the context of the research topic, the purpose, the process, and the procedure of this research.

Personal Introduction

Churches in the Kandhamal District of Odisha have always stood firm in their faith in comparison to neighboring districts. The district has seen the best and the worst periods in its past. According to the 2011 census, the majority of the population in Kandhamal is comprised of 53.58% of Scheduled Tribes and 15.76 % of Schedule Castes and the rest others (mixed caste group). The district also contains a considerably larger percentage of Christian than the neighboring districts that are 79.16 % Hindu and 20.31% Christian. The district is known not only for its natural beauty but also for the simplicity of the people group. The people who lived here always maintained great harmony and communitarian life and were always admired by the neighboring districts. However, they do not speak positively about the status of Kandhamal now.

In this context, witnessing God among the other faiths is a rare privilege and an awesome opportunity. Being a part of this community, I have witnessed the veracity of God in my personal, family, and ministerial journey. There are many and various occasions where I have experienced God. However, a few of them are remarkable to testify. I would like to highlight a few of them to witness my mystical

experience with God in my Christian journey to date. I may not have evidence to prove my experiences, but they are factual to me throughout my journey.

I will begin with my background, that is, my village background, family background, and the way I came to the Lord. I will also try to underline my journey with the Lord and acknowledge the help and support people extended which ultimately played a vital role in my life to be a true follower of Jesus. Finally, I will mention my present status with the Lord and the desire to spend my entire life in the Lord's service.

Family Background

My father comes from an economically low family. He was one of seven siblings. At a very young age, he lost his mother, and later his stepmother took care of him and his siblings. My grandfather was the only breadwinner in the family to help the survival of eight lives. He took care of a small family business and helped the entire family to survive. He had no finances to get his children educated, and going to school was a luxury for people in those days. Education was limited to only the rich and high-class people. I am thankful to God for His marvelous grace for my father to be educated. Since my grandfather was an active member of the Roman Catholic Church, his children were given the privilege to study in a far-distant school. During this time, the Roman Catholic Church and its social concerns played a vital role in my father's family. The initiation of the Roman Catholic Church changed the status of my father's family. Certainly, it was God who opened up such a platform for them to be educated. Gradually they got an opportunity to become government employees. With gratitude, they always remained humble and faithful to God. God changed their status and blessed them beyond their expectation. They were sincere in their faith and were well respected in society. They were social and always loved to be with people. They

always stood for the truth and exhibited truthful life in the community. God blessed us, and my parents became a blessing to our neighbors. I grew up observing my parents and their prayerful life. My parents were sincere in their beliefs, and they set an example for us to follow. Hence, it was my privilege to grow up in a healthy spiritual atmosphere where prayer, Bible-reading, and attendance at Church programs were compulsory.

At the age of eleven I was exposed to new lifestyles and cultures. Gradually, I found myself in the company of a notorious team of boys and ended up getting involved in anti-social activities. Though I joined with them, I was reminded about what I should be doing and what should my lifestyle be as a Christian. Perhaps such reminders became a motivating factor for me to be partially concerned about church growth as well. Even though I was in the company of bad friends who were involved in anti-social activities, I managed to keep my testimony before them.

Spiritual Formation

Though I went through this dark period in my life as a teenager, I was also experiencing the grace of God simultaneously. Looking at my friends and society, I felt burdened to pray for them. It was a painful experience to see that I was the only Christian student in the entire high school of over 400 students and in college with over 500 students. Significantly, the place where I lived was known as the “temple city” where a temple could be found every fifty meters. Certainly, I was feeling concerned about my friends and neighbors who were intensely involved in idol worship and animal sacrifices. Though my parents wanted me to become a businessman, which I too was interested in, it faded away as I was concerned about my neighbors. I am truly thankful to God for instilling in me a noble desire to serve Him.

In 1995, I started college and had to cycle about ten miles every day, each way, to reach my college. I had to cross two mountainous paths and two small rivers on the way. During these lonely rides to college, I learned to trust God and he saved me from all harms and dangers. In 1997, I accepted Jesus as my personal Lord and Savior and committed my life to Him. Confessing my sins before Him, I experienced His grace and forgiveness. My commitment to God always reminded me to do something for the people of God.

Going to a Bible school was something unusual for people in my place, and my parents never wanted me to go to a Bible college. Yet, I started exploring the possibilities of attending a Bible school on my own and was greatly disappointed. The only privilege extended to me, due to my desire to serve God, was an opportunity to actively participate in the church services and other events. During these times, I was guided by my Pastor, Rev. Bordhan, whom I often joined for outreach ministries, and he gradually became my mentor. God helped my parents understand the value of theological education for ministry. I was baptized and made a public confession of faith in 1977 and set out for my theological education in 1978.

Spiritual Journey

During the years of my spiritual formation in the Bible college, I was monitored and mentored by some sincere Christian brothers who helped me to grow in the Lord. In my first year at Bible college, I shared my hostel with senior brothers who were a great blessing to me in various aspects. I found that Rev. Sunam Beero, one of my mentors and teachers, had an enormous influence on me. Despite the various struggles I faced, I grew stronger in the Lord. I realized that challenges are inevitable even in Bible colleges. Such circumstances motivated me to dedicate my life to the service of the Lord, particularly to ministry among young people. I found

favor from my teachers and mentors who esteemed me worthy of their time. I received financial support from the administration for rendering my service to the community. In 2003, I graduated with a Bachelor of Divinity degree.

In 2003, God opened an opportunity for my Th.M. Studies in Hindustan Bible Institute, a well-known training center in Chennai, India. As I remained faithful to the Lord, He caused my administration to be favorable to me by granting me financial assistance to complete my studies, and to my surprise, even before I completed my studies, I had an offer to teach at the Eastern Bible College in North East India.

In 2008, a riot broke out against Churches and Christians in Kandhamal district. A very popular Hindu priest, a fanatic leader of the Hindu community, was assassinated, and fanatics blamed the Christians for his death and started attacking them. The dead body of their *guru* was taken in procession across the district, instigating the Hindus along the way to attack Christians. Most of the innocent tribal Hindus were provoked, and their attack claimed the lives of many Christians and many of their properties were destroyed (Allen Jr.). I am one of the victims, and I lost my house, as it was burnt down completely, and my cousin who was burnt alive. The persecution lasted over a year with intense enmity, and as a result, many Christians took shelter in the refugee camps. My father lived in one such refugee camp for six months, and he was infected with a disease during his stay there and never recovered from it. He went to be with the Lord in 2014. This is known to be one of the most devastating riots in the history of the Indian church, resulting in the persecution and killing of many Christians. Even today, there are some places where Christians are not able to return to their homes due to threats and fear. There is a feeling of unrest among the Christian society in India, and they are unable to restore their normal lifestyle. I have taken it as a challenge to seek the revival of these Churches and assist

the leaders of these Churches by restoring them to their original places. With the help of a few like-minded friends, we have already initiated the revival of the churches that are closed down due to persecution. It is my desire and prayer that they need to see and experience the grace of God and witness the faithfulness of God before people of other faiths.

In 2005, I got married to Voola Sunayana who is also a like-minded believer, committed to the service of the Lord. After our marriage, God opened an opportunity for her to pursue her Th.M., specializing in the Old Testament, at the South Asia Institute of Advanced Christian Studies, Bangalore, India. In 2010, God blessed us with a son, Aaric, and a daughter, Arin.

Statement of the Problem

Historically, Christianity played a vital role in the district of Kandhamal. Due to its geography, the district had been neglected by the government for several decades, thus leaving it devoid of basic facilities such as transportation, education, and other required infrastructure for the district to grow in its civic life. Christianity played a vital role by building an educational system and providing tribal and other natives a path of development. Christianity, once considered a key to development, is not considered important by anyone anymore, particularly by those of other faiths. They raise several concerns about Christianity, and one is that “Christianity is a foreign religion.” Perhaps this mindset of local dwellers provokes them to look at Christians as strangers, and they then tend to consider the native Christians also as foreigners. As a result, persecution became a day-to-day experience for the churches. This scenario compelled the researcher to try to find out why Christians have been hated and what makes them easy targets of persecution, focusing primarily on the riot which Christians of Kandhamal faced in 2008.

There had been similar riots before 2008, but those riots did not adversely affect the church growth in the post-riot periods. The riot of 2008 caused much greater damage, causing widespread dispersal of believers, and the church has not been able to restore itself to its former status. It is a great challenge for the researcher to see that the church is restored to its fellowship.

The researcher does see the possibilities of many more riots against the churches in the future. The impact of the 2008 riot on the churches is so heavy that it made the churches so disadvantaged and inactive that they are not able to grow and develop further. The concern of the researcher for the churches is that they become strong enough to withstand riots and remain active for restoration. Looking at the present scenario there is no guarantee that the riot would not happen again, but the restoration must take place despite all those disappointing moments. The churches should keep growing spiritually and progress in ministry. The researcher would like to develop a methodology that would help the churches educate themselves and find ways and means of restoration in the event of facing another grievous riot. The researcher would like to study the post-riot situation and to encourage the churches not to lose hope so that they are restored to the body of Christ if they face severe religious riots in the future.

The researcher looks at the future of the churches facing potential riots. If no study is conducted now to identify the causes of the riot so far, it would be difficult to safeguard the church in the future in the event of greater damage and riot. Hence it is important to assess the post-riot status of the churches to help start their restoration process, thus planning for better restoration if believers happen to face a worse situation in the future.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to analyze the current state of the Christian churches in Kandhamal following the 2008 riot to make recommendations for the restoration of the believers.

Research Questions

1. How do the media and other local sources describe the impact of the 2008 riot on society in general and the Christian church specifically in the district of Kandhamal?

2. How do church leaders and laypeople describe the impact of the 2008 riot on the Christian church in the district of Kandhamal?

3. What strategies could be implemented to help Christian church leaders bring about the restoration of the Christian church and draw in dispersed believers?

The Rationale for the Project

Religious riots are not a new phenomenon for the churches. Churches in the first century experienced such riots, and they continue in several parts of the world, specifically in India. In India, Odisha Christians are more vulnerable to riots than in any other Indian state. The district Kandhamal stands out among all twenty-nine districts of Odisha. The Christians in Kandhamal are honest and truthful even despite their poverty. The impact of Christianity on them was so great that it changed their whole lifestyle and not just by drawing them to put their faith in Christ. Government privileges are channeled mostly to Hindus, and the rights of Christians are considered very limited. However, Christians still maintain a better lifestyle in comparison to the Hindus around them.

Christianity greatly impacted all who received Jesus as their Savior and Lord, and it brought about a dramatic change in their lifestyle. As a result, Hindus began to

doubt Christians, and a great schism developed between them. The lifestyle of Christians appeared unique amidst poverty and unemployment. Others misconceive that the cause of Christian growth is nothing but foreign funds, and with many allurements people are coerced to convert to Christianity, a foreign religion. Hence, jealousy and hatred are always fresh in society.

The intention of this project is not to find the reasons for repeated riots, nor to ascertain how the lifestyle of Christians changed, but rather to understand and strengthen their faith which they maintain even after such a severe riot in Kandhamal. The researcher has experienced riots in the past but has never witnessed one as severe as this one which rendered Christians helpless and unrestored. History does not show any records regarding the post-riot situation. The 2008 riot has caused such a devastating dispersion that the churches are not able to restore themselves to normality. Since the researcher himself has experienced the riot resulting in loss of property and loss of life and has seen churches being left unrestored, he is compelled to find the causes and the effects of the post-riot scenario. Hence, with personal experience and knowledge of such challenges, the researcher stresses that this project would certainly build some hope with its outcome. Hence the researcher has outlined some probable outcomes of this project:

1. This project can provide an outlook that can help the church be restored as early as possible.
2. The church can be trained and given awareness regarding the post-riot situation and restoration if a certain methodology is discovered.
3. This research can help the church face a future post-riot situation because riots are expected again in Kandhamal.

4. This research model could become a model for other states and districts in providing awareness as most of the states of India face riots frequently.
5. This methodology can help the church remain fresh, active, and focused even when the religious riot strikes in a worse form.
6. The Biblical perspective of this project will provide a perfect model for church growth since the first-century church witnessed several riots and never ceased to grow.

Definition of Key Terms

Kandhamal: The word Kandhamal is a compound word. It derives from two words *Kandha* which may refer to “a tribe” and *Mal* simply may mean “dwellers”. Together the term Kandhamal may mean “a tribe who is dwelling in a certain place.” The other meaning of the Kandhamal could be “the people of plains” (Kandha, “Sch. Castes”)

Christian church: A called-out community that has faith in Christ the Lord and is called out to witness to Jesus Christ.

Riot: The Oxford Dictionary of English provides several definitions for the term riot, such as a violent disturbance of the peace by a crowd, uproar, or an outburst of uncontrolled feelings (Oxford Dictionary of English 1532). The encyclopedia refers to it as, “an act of violence by a follower of one religious group against followers and institutions of another religious group. A riot can be in any form, such as political, communal, or religious” (Religious Violence)

The other alternative word used instead of riot is persecution which can be defined as a cruel act and unfair treatment of a person or group, especially because of their religious or political beliefs or their race (Collins English Dictionary)

Schedule Caste (SC) and Schedule Tribe (ST): The people groups according to the class and caste system India practices. They are commonly known as Pano/Pana or Kandh/Kandha respectively.

Delimitations

This study is limited to the Kandhamal location. Various caste clashes and other religious clashes might have occurred, but this project focuses on riots against Christians in 1994 and especially in 2008. Believers are the primary source, believers in general, and especially recipients of riot. The research concentrates on the 2008 riot while highlighting the 1994 riot and the literature available from the last ten years regarding the 2008 Kandhamal riot. The researcher also paid special attention to the effects of socio-political aspects among the persecuted ones and interviewed select Church leaders and journalists to collect necessary data to avoid any possible biases as the researcher himself is a victim of the riot. Though many others have called these acts persecution, the researcher addresses it as a riot as that not only has a religious angle but also a socio-political one. The term persecution is used when needed.

Review of Relevant literature

The purpose of this research is to analyze the causes and effects of the riot and develop a strategy to keep churches active after similar riots. A low literacy level and lack of access to any full-fledged leadership training keep the leaders and the elders of the churches helpless during such religious riots. The lay leaders, pastors, and believers require training that would keep them active and encouraged for the growth of the churches amidst religious riots in the future. This research attempts to address the concern regarding the silence of the churches after the riot and tries to create a methodology that would make the leaders and members of the churches more active and aware.

Several leaders from various circles including the government, NGOs, and Christian leadership, supported the scattered believers materially, socially, and financially. However, there was hardly any attention paid to the care, encouragement, and restoration of the churches in Kandhamal after persecution. Further, there is no such record of any post-riot counseling offered to the church leaders and believers or any encouragement to remain in their faith and hope towards re-settlement. Thus, the spiritual care of the believers as a body of Christ was seriously neglected by all circles of leaders. The churches at Kandhamal have not paid any satisfactory attention to their growth, especially in educating or motivating the believers and the leaders of the affected churches. A considerable amount of literature has been published regarding the historical aspect of the 2008 riot, the socio-economic effect on the believers, the psychological trauma faced by the believers, the individual and corporate loss of property, and the loss of lives. Many have created strategies to restore property, finance, or buildings to the believers. However, there is a spiritual aspect of restoration or reformation yet to be focused on, and it is the key for the believers to stand firm in their faith and for churches to sustain and prepare themselves for the future. History records that the faith of believers in Christ has changed the status of the believers at Kandhamal in the past. Hence to maintain a proper lifestyle and good standards in society, Christians must maintain their spiritual standard and consistency. The key to the sustainability of the churches depends upon the leaders' active participation and their sensitive attitude during hard times for the churches such as riots.

In certain areas, the churches are partly restored, but a large number of people are still to be restored. This study looks at the churches of Kandhamal as a single

body and offers a strategy that can help the churches as a unit stand firm and witness the love of God.

Many books and articles are written that address the Kandhamal riot of 2008, but all of them have focused on various subjects such as the historical, political, social, or economic aspects of its causes and effects over Kandhamal churches. Though it sounded like and was called a riot, most of those books address this riot as religious persecution. Some of the key books published on persecution, particularly those published in the post-riot period of 2008, are listed below.

One of the most significant of the theses written on Kandhamal is entitled, *2008-09 – Its Causes, Effects, and Responses: Study of the Views of Christian Religious Leaders in the District*, written by Ashid Kumar Nayak for his Bachelor of Divinity studies in 2010. This thesis has focused on the social aspect of Christians at Kandhamal. D. Pratingya Raj's Th.M. thesis, written in 2018, entitled *Socio-Economic Effect of Persecution over Kandhamal Christians over the Post-Persecution Period*, concentrates on the socio-economic effect on the Christians and their great loss after persecution. As it is, Kandhamal is an economically backward state, and the persecution pushed it into further desperation. Raghu Nath Rath has focused on the History and Culture of Kandhamal, published in 2010. Premananda Nayak's book *In Kandhamal... There are No More Cheeks to Turn*, published in 2015, focuses on the freedom to practice a religion of their conviction. He also has highlighted a theological response to the violation of freedom of religion in the context of Kandhamal violence. *Kandhamal Introspection of Initiative for Justice 2007-2015* was written by Vrinda Grover and Saumya Una and published by United Christian Forum in 2017. The book focuses on the justice system and its effect on Kandhamal Christians after nine years.

Anto Akkara, a journalist who has extensively researched the post-riot scenario in Kandhamal, has written four books. The books focus on diverse areas of the riot effect. These books include:

1. *Shining Faith of Kandhamal*, published by *ATC Publication* in 2009, focused on the ultimate sacrifices of Christians and their unmovable faith. He also presents a historical background to the emergence of persecution in 2008.

2. *Kandhamal Craves for Justice* was published by *Veritas India Books* in 2013. The writer has focused here on the persecution as orchestrated tactically by the extremists who made it happen. Though the incident occurred in 2008, there was no justice delivered to the Christian community until 2013.

3. *Kandhamal a Blot on Indian Secularism* was published by *Media House*, Delhi in 2009. This book focuses on the government that claims to be secular yet highly communal. He also called Christians to stand up for their faith, providing hope of redemption from a social dimension.

4. In 2017, Akkara published a book entitled, *Who Killed Swami Laxamananda?* This book is well-coordinated researched material over the act of *Sangh Parivar* fraud and the travesty of Justice in Kandhamal. He has given a historical focus to find out the role of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), one of the Hindu extremists who diverted the truth, falsely accused innocent Christians, and forced them to be convicted of involvement. He called the act of the Hindu fundamentalists “Harvest of Hate.”

The researcher is challenged to focus on the spiritual aspect of the people, especially the believers of the Churches, as they are awaiting to be restored even after over ten years.

Research Methodology

The researcher collected and studied all the articles, books, and available materials that deal with the 2008 persecution. Since more than ten years have passed since then, the researcher met the elders and pastors of the various churches, especially those who are eyewitnesses of the whole incident. It was challenging to identify specific people who could provide first-hand reports regarding the post-riot effects. To achieve this, the researcher attempted to collect data by organizing several group meetings, interviews with specific people, and distributing questionnaires to as many as possible. Since the literacy rate is very poor and people are afraid to witness the atrocities for fear of extremists, the researcher also depended on the newspapers, magazines, and books released thus far.

Types of Research

This research uses the pre-intervention method including both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Participants

The majority of participants were believers, elders, and pastors of Kandhamal churches. Since the riot affected the churches as a whole, the believers are the witness of the 2008 riot. The elders, evangelists, and pastors not only faced riots but also continue to receive threats to their lives. There were also interviews with earlier fanatics who rioted against the Christians in 2008 but were later converted and are now Christians. The researcher also tried to find a couple of people from other faiths who would genuinely and sincerely talk about the riot.

Instrumentation

The researcher collected data from the pastors and evangelists by using the questionnaire and interview methods. Interviews were also organized with journalists.

The researcher also set up focus groups and did surveys to collect data from lay leaders and believers. During this data collection period, there were special appointments with the journalists and key church leaders for one-to-one talks. The interviews and questionnaires also involved one-to-one conversations besides the electronic sources and the secondary sources found in various libraries.

Data Collection

The researcher planned on six to eight months to collect the necessary data with the above approaches. There were special appointments with the journalist and key church leaders for one-to-one talks. Focus groups were organized, and special meetings conducted among the target groups. The interviews and questionnaires also involved one-to-one conversations, as necessary.

Data Analysis

Once the data was collected through interviews, questionnaires, and group discussions it was assessed. To finalize the data analysis, the researcher put the data in tables and graphs.

Generalizability

This project was limited to only the churches in the Kandhamal district. Though there have been several riots in the Kandhamal district from time to time, this project limited its scope to the 2008 riot and its impact in the post-riot scenario. This project sought to understand the condition of the Kandhamal churches by assessing their condition and to help those churches remain firm and restored from their dispersion. This project assessed the condition of the churches over the past twelve years and proposed possible outcomes for the churches to restore and remain normal.

Project Overview

The researcher has presented a brief of the research in chapter one. The second contains the literature review. The relevant literature includes Biblical and theological reflections of riot and persecution. The chapter also provides a review of the articles published during and since the riot in 2008.

The third chapter highlights the background and context of the place of the research. A detailed explanation of the research method will also be discussed as well as the research tools. Chapter Four includes a data assessment and highlights the detailed information found through the research by the various means of collecting information. Chapter Five provides the overall assessment and suggestions based on the research, and the researcher gives the concluding remarks.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

That riots are inevitable is evident throughout the centuries. Scorgie says, “the Christian faith is seldom allowed to exist uncontested (Scorgie 668). Riots against religious faith are not a new phenomenon and have happened throughout the centuries. Joseph Ton says, the conflict between Good and evil exists even before creation began (Ton, 201-204). Satan as a ruler of this world always stands against the will of God and conflict is evident in every step of God’s people. The struggle between the people of God and Satan is seen throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament. The believers of God have been taken into task throughout the history of the Bible. In the Old Testament Job exemplified the suffering of the righteous allowed by God and served as a typology of Christ. At the same time, the prophets of God have experienced religious riots or violence and even witnessed severe violent acts for their faith from the ruling kinds of their time. Similarly, the New Testament emerged in a most difficult era, and Christ himself has been seen as a suffering servant. Sauer says Jesus as the center of the Christian faith plays a normative role in the view of suffering and persecution (Sauer 269).

Religious persecution did not end with the crucifixion of Jesus or the disciples who followed him. It has been there ever since the church has come into existence. Many of the disciples who kept their faith in God and witnessed the love of Jesus to the world were punished to death; Stephen stands as the first in the New Testament (New International Version, Acts 7:57-58). As a continual phenomenon, the riot in the Kandhamal district is not less to believers, and it has happened there repeatedly. This chapter will highlight the Biblical and theological perspective of riots and provide

background about the persecution in Kandhamal. Persecution can come in the form of riots, violence, or as a protest against one conviction. Throughout the Bible, persecution is seen in various forms. To understand the concept, this chapter discusses both persecution and riot and uses them alternatively according to their sense in a particular context.

The Meaning and Definition of Riot and Persecution

The Greek term STASIS may mean “standing or standing firm”. This also refers to “taking a stand or rebelling.” In the Septuagint, it is translated as “what is set up, or boundary-stone.” In the New Testament, it is referred to as “the form of revolt against the Romans or strife among the Jews themselves.” Luke uses it in Acts 19: 40 as “uproar” which threatens political security and thus gives rise to the complaint. On the other hand, Acts 15:2 is speaking of lively “conflict” about questions of faith in the Christian community (Theological Dictionary of New Testament 570-574).

The Hebrew word RADAP and the Greek word DIOKW/ DIOGMOS both mean persecution, and they emphasize the concept of pursuing (Gen 44:4; Lk 17:23) and press on (Prov 11:19; Phil 3:12). The meaning of these words could be further extended to include pursuing or pressing on, oppressing, or harassing (Deut 30:7; Job 19:22; Acts 8:1). These words could refer to physical, social, mental, and spiritual persecution (Elwell 500).

Biblical Foundations

Religious riots and violence are greatly evident in the scripture. There are various reasons for that, such as jealousy (Gen 4:2-10), against good work (1 Samuel 21:1-19), revenge for condemning wicked work (Jer 37; Matt 4:1-12), vengeance against preaching the gospel (Acts 7:54-60), and faithfulness to the Lord Jesus (2 Cor 11:16-33; Gal 6:17).

The Old Testament also makes it clear that believers often faced violence. Examples include Abel (Gen 4:4-10), Lot who was troubled by the wicked generation, (Gen 19:9), Elijah who spoke against the idolatry of Israel (1 King 18:25-40), David who followed the precepts of God and was hunted by King Saul (1 Samuel 19:1-27:1), and Jeremiah, who spoke God's message of condemnation against Judea for her sins and his message was vehemently rejected (Jer 9:11, 13-16; 21:3-7; 25:1-14; Jer 36-37) and having been beaten was put into a muddy cistern (Jer 37:15; Jer 38:6-13).

There are a few examples which can be found in the New Testament. These include John the Baptist who stood against the unethical behavior of Herod Antipas and was beheaded (Mk 6:21-29), Stephen who was stoned to death, just because he witnessed the message of Jesus (Acts 6:5; 7:1-60), and Paul who for the sake of the Gospel that he preached was finally killed in Rome (2 Tim 4:6-8). Besides these, Christ himself was rejected and was crucified by his own people, though he preached the message of Love (Elwell 501).

Persecution during Kings in Old Testament

Persecution was part of the prophetic experience in the Old Testament (Acts 7:52). The time of Ahab's reign is considered to be one of the difficult times in Israel's history (1 Kings 14:9; 18:13-14; 19:10) (Beare 735) However, Green says, "Encountering the persecution was part of the Jewish heritage." The history of Israel speaks volumes about the believers of Yahweh who were awarded the death penalty for their faith and conviction. The possibility of death for the Torah became accepted as a demand of Judaism (Green 902). For example, Jeremiah was rescued time and again during the time of Jehoiakim (Jer. 26:20-24; Jer 38), and Manasseh slaughtered several prophets for protesting against his introduction of Assyrian rites into the worship of Judah (2 Kings 21:16) (Beare 736). Green also says, the people who faced

persecution felt living for God and their conviction in God became a lifestyle (Green 902).

Persecution in the First Century

Religious hatred began against Jesus Himself. The legacy of Christian persecution is as old as Christianity. The persecution came from within and from outside of the community, especially from the society and political circle in which Christians lived. Two significant groups played a key role in the persecution of Christians in the early centuries, Jews and the Romans (Green 902). Though there was not a rule sanctioned to persecute Christians during the time of Roman rule, in the latter part, the Christian church at Rome suffered inhuman treatment at the command of Emperor Nero (Beare 737).

The reward for preaching the Gospel was persecution by the Jews, Gentiles, and false Christians (2 Cor 11:26). The persecution occurred due to various reasons. The Pharisees, Sadducees, and the priestly class vehemently and frequently opposed and persecuted the believers and preachers of Christ (Acts 4:1,6; 5:17). Persecution often occurred due to the differences of faith they followed and practiced (Gerhard 19). One of the other reasons for persecution was that the content and the message of the Christians was accused of neglecting the Law of Moses (Gal 2:11-21). Additionally, when the believers were a minority, they were opposed, discriminated against, persecuted, and even martyred (Scorgie 668). Beare notes that not only were they persecuted, the believers were also expelled from the Synagogues (John 16:2; 9:22). This was regarded as a more serious punishment than the floggings which were frequently administered to Christians by the rulers of the synagogue (Beare 736). However, according to Green, though scripture was fulfilled when it happened, the message of Christ's crucifixion was a strong provocative message for Jews (Green

903). Jews always considered that the death of Christ was nothing less than a death of shame, but for the Christian the message of the Cross was significant enough to provide life eternal. Scorgie says to be persecuted may simply be meant, “to suffer because of one’s conviction, and punished or harassed inflicting injure, grieve, or afflict” (Scorgie 668). No doubt, in the Hellenistic understanding, suffering or affliction was understood as a divine plan (Gerhard 19). Guthrie quoting from E. G. Seluyn says, “If suffering comes, God must have a purpose in it” (Guthrie 98). Further, Guthrie says, “suffering constantly takes it into the sphere of God’s purpose” (99).

The attitude of Romans was as adversaries to the Christian faith and Christians themselves. The Nero persecution was one of the most feared persecutions in the history of the Christian faith. Those persecutions underlined certain attitudes of Christians which were not approved by the Roman Government (Green 902). Beare says, though it was severe persecution, the Neronian persecution then was fierce but limited to the time and the place (Beare 737).

Green says,

The Christians were persecuted for certain offenses such as the refusal of sacrifices, Lord’s Supper, which were largely misunderstood as cannibalism, and obedience to the Govt. rules imposed upon them. No doubt that all those activities Christians practiced were faith-oriented and Christians had to keep up their conviction even over their death. Hence persecutions such as Neronian, Darios persecution are the most significant. The Christian religion was considered as a private religion which perhaps was largely not considered in the Rule of Roman Government (Green 903).

Persecution in the New Testament

The New Testament approach to persecution and to suffering constantly takes them into the sphere of God's purpose. D. Guthrie says, "there is no suggestion that God is less than wise of good because suffering exists. He also further says, since the supreme example of suffering life at the heart of God's redemptive activity in Christ, it cannot be maintained that suffering is alien to the purpose of God" (Guthrie 98). Elwell, referring to Judges 8:16 and Mark 9:38-41, says, there is clear evidence that good people have been persecuted (Elwell 501). The advice and promise of Jesus is that the reward of persecution is greater in heaven (Matt. 5:12). Scorgie states persecution can function positively as a refiner of character, and persecution fosters a spirituality that avoids excessive entanglement in the affairs of this world (Scorgie 668). The crucifying of Christ and Stephen's martyrdom were part of a pattern that had been occurred over and over again (Mat 5:12; 23:34-37; 1 Thess 2:14-15).

The Book of Acts is one of the New Testament books which talks extensively about conditions of the first century and the beginning of the church. The Book of Acts also recounts several instances of persecutions and their effects on the church. The persecution of Stephen and his death caused the Gospel to spread to Jews in Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch (Acts 11:19-20), and it also helped it spread among Gentiles in Antioch. The death of Stephen gave birth to Antioch as a mission center for missionary activities. The persecution could not stop Gospel preaching, rather the word of God increased and multiplied (Acts 12:24) (Kruger 152). The spread of the Gospel occurred due to the severe persecution which forced a large crowd to flee for their lives. One of the perfect examples of its influence is in Saul, later identified as Paul, who first appeared in Christian history as a leader of the stoning crowd and of the general persecution which followed (Acts 8:1b-3) (Beare 736). The underlying

biblical reason given for persecution was the antipathy of evil toward the good (Rom 8:6-8; Rom 3:10-18). Jesus indicated that since the world hated Him, it would hate his disciples also (John 15:18-19), and he declared that if they persecuted him, they would also persecute his disciples (John 15:20). Timothy makes this clear in 2 Timothy 3:12, “everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”

Paul and Persecution

Paul himself was a master persecutor (Acts 7). His Damascus experience with the Lord changed him from master persecutor to strong witness of a suffering servant. Gerhard notes that Paul finds a positive response over every persecution and affliction he faced (Gerhard 19). The encouragement of Paul has emphatically reminded the believers that it was a privilege “not only of believers in Christ but of suffering for him as well” (Phil 1:29). The suffering was something for which they had been destined (1 Thess 3:1-4; 2 Tim 3:12). Paul believed that his suffering filled up what was lacking in Christ’s affliction for the sake of the Church (Col 1:24) (Gerhard 19). Paul encouraged the believers to rejoice not only when there was plenty but in suffering as well (Rom 5:3). For Paul, the experience of suffering produced endurance, character, and hope in God (Rom 5:3-4). Paul considered his suffering the characteristic mark of his apostolic ministry (Gal 6:17; 1 Cor 2:1-5; 2 Cor 11:23-29). Suffering for Paul was not a painful experience; it was out of the permissive will of God (Heb 6:3). Paul defined his suffering as a privilege and a sign that God himself was continually leading him into a situation of suffering (1 Cor 4:9; 2 Cor 1:9; 2:14).

Paul interpreted his suffering in terms of the cross of Christ, his death, and suffering (1 Cor 4:8-13; 2 Cor 1:3-10; Phil 3:10-11). Hence in 1 Cor 15:31, Paul exclaimed, “I die every day!” Paul’s willingness to suffer preceded his life for the

church and sets him as a perfect example for believers (Gal 4:2-15; Phil 1:3-7; 4:14-15; 2 Tim 1:8). Paul invites believers to suffer voluntarily because this suffering provides identification with Christ (Rom 8:17; Phil 1:29-30; 2 Tim 3:12). According to Paul, suffering is inevitable then and now because it is divinely orchestrated and a way through which God strengthens the faith of believers and provides sustenance to witness Christ (Rom 5:3-5; 8:12-39; 2 Cor 1:6).

Peter and Persecution

Peter addresses two sides of this issue in his epistle: suffering and witness. These two themes intertwine throughout, and they are directly related to each other (Kruger 458). The subject of persecution and trial is a key subjects for Peter in his epistles. Peter appeals to his audience, especially the slaves, to do good even when suffering unjustly for it (1 Pet 3:14,17). Further, Peter encourages his believers to consider it joy when they are insulted for the name of Christ. Peter notes that “Christ suffered while in the flesh, though He was innocent and trusted God the Father” (1 Pet 2:21-23; 3:17-18; 4:1). Christ died on the cross bearing the sins of others, and the outcome was that God raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory and authority at His right hand in heaven (1 Pet 1:18-19; 2:24; 1:7,21; 3:22) (Zuck 438). Kruger outlines two encouragements from Peter (Kruger 456). First, the suffering and persecution that Peter writes about is without a doubt the suffering that comes because of a commitment to Jesus Christ. Second, there does not appear to be anything about this suffering that makes it any different from what Christians experienced from the time of Christ’s ascension (1 Pet 5:9). Peter, by emphasizing the suffering and death of the Messiah, states its importance for Christ in accomplishing God’s will (1 Pet 1:11). Having considered the significance of Peter’s emphasis, Zuck underlines three important factors, which follow.

1 Peter 1:18-21

This passage describes Jesus' death as the sacrifice that provided redemption from sin. The keyword is "redeem" in verse 18 which denotes release from slavery by payment of a ransom (Matt 20:28; Mk 10:45). The blood of Jesus brought back a sinner and ratified the New Covenant (Jer 31:31-34) (Zuck 442). In 1 Pet 1:19, Christ's blood signifies His life poured out on the cross as the price for the Christians' redemption.

1 Peter 2:21-25

In the given passage Peter described Christ's death as suffering. The verb "suffering" is used four times (2:19-23). Suffering was the agony Christ endured before and on the cross. Peter's purpose in this description is seen in verse 21 in the wider context of innocent but patient suffering. Christians are called to suffer (v. 21a) injustice without retaliation, and in this, they follow in Christ's steps (v. 21b).

Peter's statement in verse 21, "Christ suffered for us," suggests the larger significance of Christ's suffering, which is made explicit in subsequent verses (Zuck 442). Christ suffered undeservedly and without resisting, submitting Himself to God's will and justice. The reason for His innocent death was to provide for others (v. 24) (Zuck 493).

1 Peter 3:18

This verse also emphasizes the substitutionary nature of Christ's death. He suffered once for all sins, the just for the unjust. Christ was righteous and thus suffered not for any misdeeds of His own but as a substitute for those who were unrighteous and who justly deserved punishment for sin (Zuck 443). Peter states that the purpose of Christ's suffering was to bring sinners to God (1 Pet 3:18b).

Theological Foundations

Life for Christians is life according to God's will (Heb 10:36). Even the quest for maturity is subject to the permissive will of God (Heb 6:3). According to James, all human plans should be linked with the Lord's will because life itself is dependent on it (Jas 4:15). Tibebe Eshete says, "The expressed end product of the persecution is to 'redeem the lost'" (Eshete 312).

Christ the Suffering Servant

The way of Jesus the Messiah, through suffering to glory, is exemplary for his disciples. All Christian martyrdom has its basic foundational orientation and footing in Jesus Christ, the "faithful and true witness" (Rev 1:5; 3:14; 1 Pet 2:21-24; Heb 2:14-18). Ever since childhood Jesus faced persecution and was resisted time and again over his preaching. Christ faced intimidation as a criminal because of his faithfulness to his father (John 18:37). To Jesus, the crucifixion was not at all a tragic failure of his mission, but rather its very fulfillment (Sauer 269).

The death of Christ on the cross set an example for his followers. The death of Christ on the cross was nothing but a substitutionary death on the behalf of humans, and it was sufficient, irreplaceable, and unreparable. By doing so Jesus set a pattern to follow him.

Therefore, Christian suffering for Christ is a continuation of the suffering of Christ, and it is from him only that it receives its characteristic mark (John 17:18; 20:21). Since the believers are the temple of living God, it is clear that they will be treated as Christ was treated then. The core meaning of taking up one's cross in the discipleship of Jesus (Lk 9:23) is witnessing to Jesus Christ, even in a situation of persecution and martyrdom (Sauer 270).

God's Initiative in Salvation

God is the author of salvation with his sovereignty. God functions perfectly no matter what happens. As sovereign and omniscient, God has already appointed His son Jesus as an atoning sacrifice for the work of salvation (1 Pet 1:20). Though Christ was rejected by his own, he was foreordained by His father for the task (Zuck 445). The initiation of Jesus ultimately establishes the relationship between Jesus and the people who follow him. It is expected that his followers endure till the end and remain victorious in Him (Mt 24:13). The call from God and the relationship with Jesus assures salvation for those who follow him sincerely (Zuck 446). Paul's apostolic suffering was "instrumental suffering" because it serves to bring the gospel to those who need to be saved and to keep faithful those who have been saved (Sauer 271)

Church the Body of Christ

A Christian never suffers alone, and a Christian martyr never dies alone but is always a part of the body of Christ which sustains him or her. According to 1 Pet 5:9, "the body of Christ throughout the world participates in suffering of members of the body of its time, through information, prayer, support, suffering and rejoicing with them." 1 Cor 12:26 says, "if one part of the body suffers, all parts are equally concerned." Martyrdom serves to build up the church because those suffering and martyred are blessed by God (Sauer 271).

Unity and Care

Unity and Care is one of the key qualities of the triune God. Unity and care were essential practices in the first-century church. 1 Pet 1:22 states, "Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply from the heart." The first century was a perfect model to extensively practice both unity and care (Unity in Christ). David Chadwell says,

“there was an enormous joy and sharing in the first-century church” (Acts 2:41-47) (Unity and Uniformity). The local believers provided for the needs of pilgrim believers who wished to prolong their visit to Jerusalem. Acts 4:32-5:11 sets a perfect model where “unity and care” are demonstrated. Mikeal C. Parsons says, “Acts 4:32-35 is expressed a utopian vision of the Christian community grounded in a common understanding of the intricate web of accountability found in views of ancient friendships” (Parsons 72). Johnson says, “The community of possession functions in the first place as a manifestation of spiritual unity” (Johnson 199).

The believers took the proceeds from their sales and laid it at the feet of the apostles (Acts 4:35). It was absolutely a voluntary act of genuine concern for each other. The acts Luke alludes to here were extraordinary and voluntary acts of Christian concern done in response to special needs among the believers, and they involved both sharing possessions and selling estate (Gaebelin 311). These acts of voluntary service increased the number of disciples in the faith despite adversaries outside (Acts 6:1). In such practices, the act of the Holy Spirit was significant to convince the believers and punish the hypocrite.

God’s Mission for His Church

Suffering and martyrdom are not ends in themselves but serve God’s mission right to the end of time and are linked to mission by multiple relationships (Mt 24:14). Suffering and weakness of the witness are made of mission (2 Cor 12:9f; 4:7-10), and martyrdom becomes the most radical form of witness. Suffering is also a test for the genuineness of mission rather than a mishap to be avoided at all costs. The famous quotation of the church father Tertullian says, “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church” (Reeve, “Apology of Tertullian”). The fruit of martyrdom remains a grace from God (John 12:24). While in some places religious riots have led to the

multiplication of the church, in other parts of the world heavy riots have destroyed or marginalized churches (Sauer 272).

Kandhamal and Its Context

The district Kandhamal is one of the largest Tribal inhabited places in Odisha. The major groups found here are Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Scheduled Castes (SC). To understand the context of the riot at Kandhamal, it is important to understand the socio-political background of Christian minorities in Kandhamal. It is also equally important to understand the presence of Sangha Parivar (a federation of militant Hindu organizations) and their Hindutva ideology, especially the presence of Swami Laxmanananda Saraswati and his mission and vision in the context of Hindu and Christian conflict (Nayak 106).

Socio-Political Background of the Christian Minority in Kandhamal

The economic status of Odisha is below the poverty level in comparison to other states of India. In the state of Odisha, Kandhamal is one of the lowest income districts, due to its geographical location and the people group that live there. The district holds two of the major caste groups, known as Scheduled Caste (also known as Pano) and Scheduled Tribe (also known as Kandha). The district “Kandhamal” was named in 1994 after the Kandha Tribe, though earlier it was known by the name “Phulbani” (Nayak 106). According to the 2011 census, detailed information of its growth from 2001 to 2011 is shown in Table 2.1.

Description	2011	2001
Population	7.33 Lakhs	6.48 Lakhs
Male	359,945	322,799
Female	373,165	325,402
Average Literacy	64.13	52.68

Male Literacy	76.93	69.70
Female Literacy	51.94	35.86

Table 2:1, Census 2001-2011 (“Kandhamal District Population”)

As per the census of 2011, out of the total population, 9.9% of people live in urban areas while 90.1% live in rural areas. The population caste rate is Scheduled Caste (SC) 15.8%; while Scheduled Tribe (ST) was 53.6% of the total population of the Kandhamal district of Odisha. Religious belief is also divided based on caste, and the majority of Christians are from the Scheduled Caste. The religious status of Kandhamal District is shown in Table 2.2.

Religion	Total	Percentage (%)
Hindu	580,300	79.16%
Christians	148,895	20.31%
Muslim	2,138	0.29%
Rest	-	-

Table 2:2, Religious Population – (Kandhamal District Population)

As per the 2011 census, per capita expenditure per annum is Rs. 790 in Odisha and for the members of the SC and ST is Rs. 558. In the rural areas of Odisha, such as Kandhamal, the figure drops to Rs. 422 for SC and STs. The cause of poverty could be that most of the land is empty, and only 12% of the land is used for cultivation. Of the rest 71% is comprised of forest, and the rest is barren land. It should also be noted that Adivasis/Dalits (Tribal/low caste) are not religious, but ethnic groups (Nayak 107).

Christians are considered a religious minority in India, especially the Christians in Kandhamal that belong to the Adivasi and Dalit communities. They are known as Kandha Christians and Pano Christians, respectively. Though Christian missionaries arrived at the end of the 19th century, a notable number of conversions of three-fourths of the Pano Scheduled Castes took place only during the past few decades (Kenjamela and Michael 31).

A Brief History of Kandhamal Christians

Christianity in the Kandhamal district is nearly one-and-a-half centuries old. History witnesses that Baptist missionaries became enrooted to Kandhamal in the years 1859-1863. They have pioneered modern centers for education and health in Kandhamal. The economic status of Christians in Panos is weak, and socially they are discriminated against. Though the constitution of India defines it as a secular state, Indian law discriminates against the people on the ground floor of religion and caste. Christians, especially, are deprived of all government reservations and privileges under the provisions of the constitution. Though the law of the constitution has been challenged in the supreme court of India time and again, it is still in force as the government delays its response. Hence it is obvious that the *Dalit* Christians in Kandhamal will remain economically, politically, and culturally deprived and discriminated against (Nayak 108-109).

The Entrance of Hindu Religion

The Hindus in Kandhamal are proselyte Hindus. They were known for their faith in nature, which did not allow them to worship idols. They were by nature ethically concerned and offered their conscience decisions. The emergence of Sangha Parivar in Odisha has decimated the belief system of the Tribals dwelling in Kandhamal.

The Emergence of the Sangh Parivar

There is a common saying that “India is a Hindu Rashtra” (Rashtra simply means Nation). One of the prominent Hindu leaders publishing pamphlets in 1923 asked who is a Hindu and defined a Hindu as one who regards India as both “Father-Land” and “Holy Land,” corresponding, he emphasized, to Muslims and Christians whose holy lands are Arabia and Palestine, respectively (Savarkar 90-92). Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) is an organization whose goal it to Hinduize the country India. The RSS was founded in 1925 and is the principal organ of the Hindu nationalist movement Mr. Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar, the second *Sangh Chalak*, or leader, of RSS defined its ideology based on five factors: land, race, religion, culture, and language (Galwalker 15-116). Further, he claimed that “All those not belonging to the nation India in obviously belong to Hindu Race, religion, culture and language. Christians had been looked like a direct threat to India’s national integrity. Christians also had been blamed as agents of the international movement for the spread of Christianity, and refuse to offer their first loyalty to their motherland they are born” (118). The RSS functions across India with this adversarial mindset. The RSS functions as a missionary agency to spread the Hindu ideology across India. In Hindu nationalist discourse, conversion is seen in terms of disjuncture and viewed as the outcome of predatory actions carried out by Christians upon vulnerable communities. (Griffiths 6).

To monitor such conversions, RSS has given birth to organizations such as Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), Bajrang Dal, Mohila Morcha, Durga Vahini, Rashtriya Sevika Samiti, and many others. All these organizations function under the umbrella of the RSS and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which is a political wing.

Sangh Parivar Influence

Swami Laxmanananda Saraswati, a VHP missionary, appeared in Kandhamal district in 1969. His mission and vision were to eliminate Christianity from Kandhamal, Odisha. As a result, during this period Laxmanananda and Sangh Parivar began the aggressive conversion of the Kandha tribal. With the support of RSS, they initiated Ashrams, opened around 250 schools, and established social service centers for tribal children. His key agenda was to Hinduize, and he simultaneously spread anti-missionary propaganda that encouraged the reconversion of Christians to Hinduism. (Nayak 09-110). Augustine Kenjamala quotes Laxmanananda's statement as "The sooner the Christians return to the Hindu fold the better it would be for the country" (Kenjamala and Michael 25).

Reconversion and Laxmanananda against Christians

Laxmanananda lived in Odisha as a missionary of VHP from 1970-2007. During his tenure, he conducted a "gharvapasi" (homecoming) program. This program aimed to reconvert Christians back to Hinduism. He alleged that the Christians in India had been forcefully converted from Hinduism to Christianity. The Christians have barriers to exercising their freedom of faith, as the constitution provides. The Pano Christians, especially, suffer all sorts of discrimination in practicing their faith (Nayak 110). The Kapila Samhita describes Odisha as the Holy Land of the Hindus (The Economic and Political Weekly). Among all the Indian states, Odisha was the first state in the 1960s where Anti-Conversion Law (Christian solidarity worldwide) was enacted (Ahmad, Foreign Law).

Laxmanananda also became a cause of ethnic conflict between Kandhs (ST) and Panos (SC). He worked as a representative of Kandhs before the government. He states, "tribal are backward Hindus and could avail all the economic benefits and

reservations of the government. And it is so that they could avail of the reservations and benefits from the government. However, if a Dalit Hindu converts to Christianity, he/ she loses the above-mentioned benefits. Though the ‘Dalit’ Pano Christians are demanding the privileges they have remained unheard” (Nayak 111-112). No doubt that Laxmanananda was a pioneer of ethnic conflict between so-called Hindu Tribal and Christian Dalits at large.

Riot in Kandhamal

The 2008 riot was not something new for the Kandhamal district. There had been multiple riots earlier, ever since the arrival of RSS and VHP missionaries, especially Laxmanananda Saraswati. On the arrival of Laxmanananda, reconversion, known as the “Gharavapsi” (Homecoming) movement, was practiced for several decades. Faiz Ahmad Faiz mentions in *Crossed and Crucified* that in the 1970s and 1980s VHP concentrated on the campaign against beef-eating and other anti-Christian propaganda. For the first time in 1987 attacks against the Church began in Kandhamal. He also reports that in 1985 there were 12 clashes, but in 1986 and 1987 the number of clashes rose to 13 and 20, respectively. Further, the report suggests that “a leader of VHP, Swami Laxmanananda Saraswati has so far reconverted about 18000 converted Christians into Hinduism” (36). There is a brief report regarding the incidents that happened in Kandhamal since then (Faiz). They are:

1. On 2nd October 2nd and 3rd, 1988, Christians were brutally attacked in a place called Katingia.
2. On January 24th, 1989, a priest and a Church were attacked in the Sadingi village of Kandhamal.
3. Churches were attacked in Sahaliguda, Duringpodi, Budaguda, Nuagam, and Madhiguda.

4. In 1997 in the Beticola village (G. Undayagiri), Christians and the Church were attacked.

5. On August 26th, 2004, the Lady of Charity Catholic Church, Raikia was vandalized.

6. In Chakapada, around April 8-10, 2006, about 342 Christians were reconverted to Hinduism on a special occasion that RSS organized.

Unfortunately, the ceremony was attended by the Minister of Law and other ministers, MLAs, and MPs.

7. The trend continued to December 2007 and then to August 2008 with greater evil.

The 2008 Riot

The 2008 riot was one of the worst religious riots Kandhamal has ever witnessed. It is also known as one of the greatest religious riots in the history of Orissa and India as well. No doubt that this act was well planned. To understand the 2008 riot, the violence in December 2007 must be understood as background. This section highlights a few historical facts that happened before the religious riot and violence against Christians that occurred in Kandhamal.

The Backdrop of the 2007-08 Riot at Kandhamal

The riot of 2008 did not come out of nowhere. It is clear from the evidence and the way it was executed that it was a well-planned act. The communal tension has been witnessed frequently ever since the VHP leader Laxmananand Saraswati arrived in Kandhamal soil in the 1960s. However, the district has witnessed communal tensions higher than ever before and very frequently during the two decades prior to 2008 over sustained conversion activities by Christian missionaries (“Kandhamal Violence”). For the last fifty years, the right-wing Hindutva group has persistently

targeted Christians and provoked hatred between Christian and Hindu Communities. M. T. Saju, quoting from K. P. Sasi's 90 minute-long documentary, "Voices from the Ruins: Kandhamal in Search of Justice," writes in a Times of Indian report that, "The hate campaign against Christians in Kandhamal began in the late 1960s and it continued for several decades culminating in violence against minorities in 1980, 1990, and 2000s" (Saju, "Capturing the Spark").

The attacks have been frequent, and threats for the converted to reconvert became a normal message to encounter. The local priest, nuns, and Christian leaders are the key victims of anti-Christian violence. In the Kandhamal district, the RSS and VHP activities have been evident, and they carry out violence time and again within their nearest circles. Given the record, the Hindu fundamentalists have been frequently targeting Christians for the last twenty years. The leaders of RSS, VHP, and Bajrang Dal promote hatred against Christians. They organize groups like, Hindu Jagaran Samukshya (Hindu awareness programs), Durga Bahini (Especially for ST women who belonged to the Hindu faith), and the Jagarana Sabhas consisting of members of Bajrang Dal and the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP). Most of the members of these groups come from Scheduled Tribe (ST). No doubt the purpose of the setting of these organizations was to provoke Hindus against their fellow Christian neighbors to persecute them from time to time. The climax of their purpose was fully executed in the riot event of 2008.

The attacks on Christians have been very frequent though they are not reported in the day-to-day news. One of the major reasons Christians are persecuted by Hindus is the declaration of Hindu fundamentalists that, "Christianity is a foreign religion and only Hindu can live in Kandhamal" (Akkara, Early Christians 140). Praveen Togadia, VHP national secretary at the time, claimed that "the conversion and killing of

Swami” was nothing but a Christian conspiracy against Hindus (Akkara, Who Killed Swami 196).

The Violence of December 2007

The violence of December 2007 was just a step towards the larger persecution of August 2008. Both the persecution of 2007 and of 2008 was not something new rather the gravity of the persecution was higher than it had been in the past.

The violence at Kandhamal began in December 2007. The 2007 event was just a prelude to later when over 100 churches were targeted, desecrated, and destroyed and hundreds of Christian houses were gutted.

The spread of hatred has gotten worse since then. The fanatics went on to destroy Christmas decorations at a Christian majority Bamunigam village on Christmas Eve. Less than an hour later, there was also an alleged report of an “attack” on Swami Laxmanananda at the nearby Dasingbadi village by Christians. The news of the “assault” on the Swami spread like wildfire across Kandhamal and outside. To everyone’s surprise, this became a focus for the media which made the situation worse. The visual image of a small remote village was flashed in national media within a couple of hours. It seemed that the whole plot was preplanned and executed in a secretive manner, and as a result Christians become a target across Kandhamal starting the same evening. For weeks ahead of Christmas, saffron, which indicates a fanatic outfit of Hindu devotees, outfits had been regularly marched across Kandhamal threatening Christians to give up their faith or leave the place, claiming India belonged to Hindus alone.

Having sensed the gravity of the situation, Christians had met with the District Collector and the Superintendent of Police seeking protection from assailants.

However, the plea seemed to do nothing. Rather hooligans posted symbols of the

Hindu “OM” on the walls of several Churches and other places Christians considered Holy places. The hooliganism spread across Kandhamal warning Christians not to celebrate Christmas and to stay away from all such celebrations. Despite several warnings, the believers at Barakhama village kept on celebrating, which resulted in fundamentalists’ fury. This furious attack killed at least two Christian believers, and 400 Christian houses were torched. One of the leaders of these fundamentals by the name Satyajit Digal uttered this statement repeatedly saying, “We do not want to see any Christian in Kandhamal. Next time, you will be our targets” (Ramani, “They don’t feel sorry”). Christian places such as St. Paul’s Seminary and Mount Carmel were reduced to ashes on Christmas Eve. The most surprising thing was that all of these incidents took place right in front of the police officers. As a strategic plan, the roads were blocked by placing giant trees on the road. Although the security forces wanted to go to the remote villages they could not access them. To avoid retribution local Hindus were not included among the attackers, though they were in the mob. The assailants were brought in trucks from outside to carry out the agenda efficiently. As part of the strategy, the telephone lines had been snapped, electricity cut off, and roads were blocked by putting giant logs on the road. Maximum damage was caused to the Christian houses, institutions, and churches. Though it is claimed that this was communal violence between Kandhs and Panos, the incident that happened in Daringabadi was a separate event. As the mob approached the World Vision office, they wanted to set the building on fire. However, the owner pleaded them off saying by he was a Hindu, and they should spare his house. As a result, the mob carried out all those property like office files and set them on fire outside.

No doubt the publicity of persecution brought the central minister Shivraj Patil to the district, but it resulted in no benefits for the suffering Christians. Unfortunately,

Manish Kumar Verma, Kandhamal District collector even banned relief work of NGOs for the Christians. There were several cases. At least 170 cases were registered, but none of them were found guilty, and they were just set free. The law turned a deaf ear to the cry of people who had lost their dear ones, their property, and many other things. There was no help given. Though assurances were uttered time and again, nothing was fulfilled. Though people were arrested who were mentioned in the complaints, they were later set free stating that there was no evidence to prosecute them. Many of the Christians left their villages and migrated to safe places, such as cities like Bhubaneswar and parts of other states. Action was hardly taken against the fundamentalists who looted and torched churches and Christian institutions during the Christmas violence. Though there were some miscreants who burnt police stations and government offices, they were let free as well, stating there was no evidence against them. Perhaps such a reaction without any stern action encouraged saffron brigades to ignore the constitution and to do what they felt like doing. This quietness of government enhanced the radical growth in Kandhamal, and minority Christians had been persecuted time and again (Akkara, Kandhamal a Blot 112-118).

The Violence of 2008 at Kandhamal

Reconversion became a feature of the 2008 communal violence in Kandhamal (Griffiths 19). Just nine months later the violence broke out for the second time. This time the reason was the death of Swami Laxmanananda Saraswati and his four associates on August 23, 2008. The Christians were blamed for their death though Maoists took responsibility for assassinating him because of his alleged involvement referring the communal confusion (Pattnaik, "Maoists Expel").

Despite repeated announcements by Maoist leaders owning the responsibility of assassinating Swami and four of his associates, Odisha VHP General Secretary Gauri Prasad Rath stated on Sunday, August 24, 2008 that, “Christians have killed Swami.” Further, he added a provocative statement saying, “We would give a fitting reply to it very soon” (Report on Anti-Christian). As a reaction to the untoward

incident, the fanatics claimed action against the killers.

They threatened that failing to punish the killers would cause a violent protest. The protest was called for, and on the following day there was a twelve-hour shut down as a mark of demanding

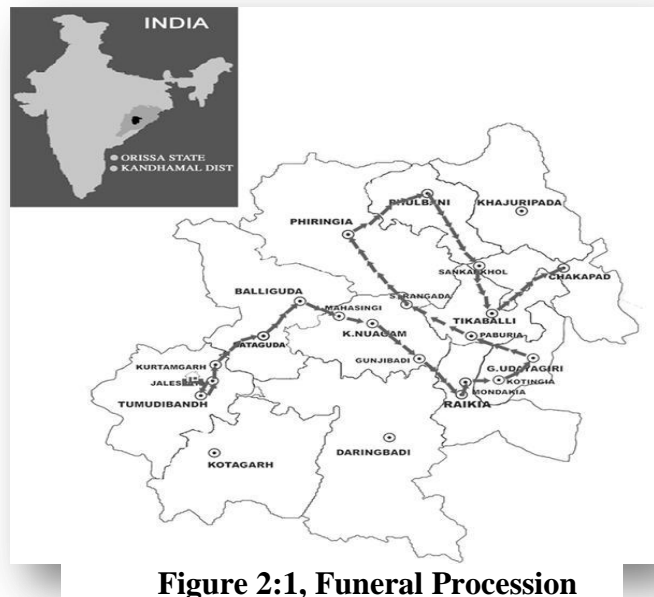


Figure 2:1, Funeral Procession

punishment to the killers (Report on Anti-Christian). With a vehement demand on the Maoists' claim, senior BJP ministers (Harichandan) issued statements saying that Maoists were not the culprits.

Tribal Hindus, having been provoked with such statements were instigated to attack their Christian neighbors. With a lot of aggression, the funeral procession of Laxmanananda began from Jaleshpeta ashram, where he and his four disciples were killed. This procession covered nearly 150 KM through many villages and towns to reach Chakapada, his main ashram. Though there was section 144 as per The Indian Penal Code prohibits the gathering of five or more persons, holding of public meetings, imposed in the district, nothing could stop the procession. It was allowed to pass through some areas which were not between Jaleshpeta and Chakapada. During

this procession, various slogans against Christians were used, such as “Jay Sri Ram... Jay Bajarang Bali... wipe out Christians.” The communally charged crowd attacked Christian villages and destroyed houses, shops, and churches that belonged to Christians. The Hindu leaders assured the mob that there would not be any problem though they engaged in such activities. The attacks were the most atrocious act the Sangh Parivar and the mob had engaged in. The attacks began on the morning of August 24, 2008 and continued till the end of September. The persecution of 2008 had extensive effects on several areas of the lives of the Christians in Kandhamal. They might be classified as follows.

The Denial of the Administration and the Atrocities Act of Violence of 2008

Even as the fanatics systematically executed their plans, the police and the administration did not react to the plans. In several villages, the police had already warned Christian village dwellers that the attacks were going to take place, and the



Figure 2:2, Rioters March

government took a stand as a mere spectator., The Christians at Rupagaon, 2 to 3 km from the Chakapada ashram, say that, having been warned by police regarding the incident, the Christian village tried to contact the superintendent of police but could not connect. They were told that around, 20,000 - 30,000 fanatics had been gathered

at the ashram and were coming to attack all Christians. The Christians were advised to flee to the forests. Some of the eyewitnesses' state that even as they fled to the forest they could see nearly 300 - 400 people marching toward their village armed with swords, clubs, and *mashals* (flambeau) in their hands, and most looked furious with tied red headbands. This crowd also consisted of a good number of women possessed with the same instruments. According to witnesses, the crowd looked horrifying with their aggressive look and the shouting, "*Bajrangbali ki Jai*," which simply may mean "hail monkey god." As they entered into the village and torched the houses, Rasananda Pradhan, a paralytic who could not escape, was burnt alive. The witnesses say that for a couple of days they spent their days and nights in the forest without food and water carrying little children (Faiz 6).

Another witness from Sipaiju village states that before the attacks there was a meeting on Sunday hosted by RSS leaders. Having been informed by some faithful sources, the village of over 45 Christian families escaped to the forest. Later they discovered that their houses had been completely burnt. The Hindus were instigated to attack their Christian relatives (Faiz 23).

There are witnesses with shocking stories. A woman from Tiangia Village says, "For the first time, there was a conflict between the two communities in the village after the 2007 December riot" (Faiz 6). However, the *Sarpanch* (the elected head of the village) was in support of the Christians, though he was a Hindu. The helplessness of *Sarpanch* was evident, and in his presence Trinath Nayak was hacked to death. At the same time Bikram Nayak, a Hindu found to have mixed with the Christians, was killed. All these times they shouted slogans, "*Bharatmata Ki Jai*" and "*Bajrangbali Ki Jai*." The unequivocal message was, "Do not spare anything belong to Christians, may it be their young women, children, properties, but to kill

and destroy them to nothing. Especially kill all the children so that they will not be there to take revenge” (7). Besides their cruel provoking slogans the mob was supplied kerosene to burn houses and dangerous equipment to kill and destroy the Christian properties. One of the elderly men of about 70 years reports that he was forced to renounce Christianity, but his denial caused him extreme brutality. Further, he also says that they were not only rioters but also looters, who looted the property of Christians. The victims were left without help and in many cases lost their dear ones. Many were helpless and did not know where they would return to their homes. When they found any Christians, the fanatics assaulted them or took their lives. The merciless rioters did not spare even children. The young girls were molested and burnt alive. One such incident was given as testimony by a woman whose daughter was fifteen years old. The young girl was dragged in front of her mother; they pulled her hair, put kerosene on her, and struck a match. The mother kept watching the atrocity demonstrated on her daughter. According to a PUCL (People’s Union for Civil Liberty) report, all this human loss and suffering became cold government statistics: 39 deaths, 3 missing, 415 villages affected, 3,776 houses, 195 churches and prayer houses damaged, and 25177 people sheltered in relief camps. Though the actual statistics are much higher than these government’s ones, the government remained merely a mute spectator (Faiz 7-8).

Following are the underlining facts the rioters proposed even before the riot began on December 24, 2008. These points highlight the plans of Hindu extremists conjoined by the BJP government.

1. Before the attack, the local RSS units conducted meetings in the *panchayat* offices, schools, and *anganwadi* centers and distributed notices

stating the time at which the Hindutva groups would come and attack the village.

2. The Christian families were served this ultimatum: consider entering the Hindu fold or be prepared to be killed.

3. Almost all families should seek refuge in the nearby jungles.

4. As for the Sangh Parivar Mastermind, the people were provoked and were oriented with systematically organized plans.

5. Neighbors and nearby villagers vowed to actively participate in the violence.

6. Women with weapons would be directly involved in the program. The traders should provide kerosene and transportation to the rioters. After which rioters should be rewarded with food and in some places alcohol each evening.

7. Rumors should be spread saying the Christians have brought the flesh and blood of Swamiji and celebrated in the Church.

8. The district-level government machinery was advised not to take any effective action to protect the Christians for at least one month.

9. Christians should be targeted irrespective of their caste or tribe. Hence the phone calls to the police station were rarely replied to and registered FIRs.

10. Looting and damaging of property should be methodically carried out to cause the economic ruin of the Christian community.

Having noted these ten points, the rioters executed the action in a very effective way. The saffron brigades placed the flag on the rooftops of every Christian house, and the Churches were destroyed as a sign of their victory. *Jai Sriram* (here is

the victory of lord Ram) and *Om Ram Rajya* (ultimate victory belong to lord Ram) were written on the walls, having removed the crosses of every church they had. Saffron flags identified Hindu-owned centers. The fanatics, like VHP and RSS, imposed the flags to be hoisted on the housetops, if not threatened to kill or leave the village. (Faiz 8-9). There are few testimonies quoted from first-hand source interviews that highlight the gravity of atrocities executed by Hindu fanatics.

Attack on the Churches

The attack on Christians was so immense that there were more than 1000 churches destroyed in Kandhamal. On August 23, 2008 the Roman Catholic Church was destroyed and vandalized by the Hindu fundamentalists in Kanjamed. They shouted anti-Christian slogans. They had strong weapons made of iron, like axe, swords, and long iron rods, and they also carried petrol and kerosene. They stoned the church and after damaging all its assets set it on fire. As the tense situation went on the churches were attacked, and their property destroyed.

Destruction of Property

During this persecution, damages were done not only in the church buildings but also to the believers' property. Shops that belonged to Christians were destroyed. The mob looted the properties and set fire to the remaining. Christian NGOs, schools, and children's homes were shattered, along with all their assets. Vishwa Hindu Parishad activists continued to burn houses and household articles of Christian families. The Blog "Orissaconcerns" records that, on August 25, 2008 seventeen houses were destroyed in Raikia. Apart from houses, 130 -140 shops and other businesses were destroyed.

Physical Attack

The assurances from the leaders demoralized the senses of rioters, and they went from assaulting Christian leaders to killing believers. On the night of August 26 the Hindu radicals entered the house of Harihar Das (Medical Street, Raikia), broke down the door, and destroyed and burnt everything possible. The family of Harihar Das and Namrata Das and her sisters hid in a little bathroom. Before they left the Hindu fanatics left a bomb in a dresser. After the attackers had gone, the occupants came out of the house, but little Namrata was curious and stayed behind to look at the damage. The bomb exploded and wounded her face, hands, and back (Kani, New Anti-Terror Bills 42-44). The Divyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection records that the police remained as mere spectators during these atrocities (Divyajyoti Journal 51). There are several reports of sexual assault and molestation, and many other cases have gone unreported due to the shameful silence of government authority. Though the government was mute the testimonies of the victims sound high and authentic.

Naked Parade: There were many reports concerning the naked parades, but most of them were kept hidden. Many who suffered have been threatened not to speak out.

The incident recorded by Ajit Kumar Digal, a 30-year-old man and father of two children, comes from Sritiguda, Kandhamal. On August 25, 2008, he had decided to stay at home while the riot was spreading across Kandhamal. A while later he heard a mob of about fifty shouting “Jai Bajrang Bali.” As they approached his house, they ordered him to come out and started slapping him. They commanded him, saying, “if you don’t deny your Christian faith now, we will kill you.” Someone behind Ajit pulled out his loincloth and made him stand up naked. From there, he was paraded naked for a couple of hundred meters. Meanwhile one of the respected Hindu

villagers came across and rebuked the mob after which Ajit was released. After which Ajit said, “When I was caught, I was scared. But, I am fearless now. Whatever may happen, I am not worried. I will always remain a Christian” (Akkara, Kandhamal a Blot 95).

Nun’s Rape: There were several rapes reported, but the statement of Sister Meena is one of the most thrilling testimonies among them. The following is the full text of the statement Sister Meena read out at the news conference on October 25, 2008, at the Indian Social Institute in New Delhi.

On 24th August, around 4: 30 pm, hearing the shouting of the large crowd, at the gate of Divyajyoti 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 houses of a Hindu gentleman who sheltered us.

On 25th August, around 1: 30 p.m., the mob entered the room where I was staying in Prahlad’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 roads, sickles, etc. They took both of us on the main road. Then they led us to the burnt 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 veranda on the way to the dining room, which was full of ashes and broken glass pieces. One of them tore my blouse and the 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 veranda. When it was over, I managed to get up and put on my petticoat and saree. Then 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 hid under the staircase. The crowd was shouting “where is that Sister, come let us rape her, at least 100 people rape.” They found me under the staircase and took me out to the road. There I saw Fr. Challan was kneeling 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 the fire. Someone suggested making us parade naked. They made us walk on the road to Nuagam market which was half a kilometer from there. They made us hold our hands and walk. I was with a petticoat and saree as they had already torn my blouse and undergarments. They tried to strip me 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 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. The crowd led me and

Fr. Thomas Chellan to the Nuagam Block office building saying that they will hand us over to the Block Development Officer (BDO). From there along with the BDO, the mob took us to the police outpost. The mob said that they will come back after eating and one of them who attacked me remained in the police outpost. Policemen then came to the police outpost. They were talking very friendly with the man who had attacked and stayed back. In the 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 sometimes in a 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 policemen 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 consequences?” after which I was taken to the hospital for a medical check-up. While after returning on 26th August around 9:00 a.m. we were taken to Balliguda police station. When I was writing the FIR, the Inspector-In-Charge asked me to hurry up and not to write in detail. After inspector interference, I wrote what he instructed, however, I was not given an FIR copy. In the later part of the day, they escorted both of us to the Bhubaneswar bus and we could escape from that dread situation. In

protecting us, the state police failed to stop the crimes; failed to protect me from the attackers. Rather they were friendly with the attackers, and they tried their best that I did not register an FIR, not make complaints against police. (Akkara, Kandhamal Craves 75-77).

Persecuted Believer

According to Anto Akkara, among the four dozen firsthand sources, the witness of Niladri Kanhar's faith stands tall. Generally, he is also known as "St. Paul of Kandhamal." History reports that, unlike Paul, Niladri Kanhar himself was a persecutor who later received the Lord and underwent persecution himself.

Niladri Kanhar was an active henchman of the saffron *Parivar*, "family," for nearly 30 years. He is known to be one of the frontline leaders for VHP. Niladri had attacked the Christians, desecrated churches regularly, and forcibly reconverted dozens of them. But his turning to Christ turned his world upside down. He was not recognized by his family and had to experience a social boycott. He was attacked by the fanatics time and again, and several cases had been filed against him. On July 27th, Niladri was caught by the bigots, had tied his hands at the back, and was beaten up. Niladri claims that his conversion to Christianity upset Swami Laxamanananda Saraswati because he was known and considered as one of the faithful disciples of Swami. As long as Niladri was in the saffron camp, though there were several charges and cases against him, no police action occurred, but soon after conversion, all the charges were pursued against him. His children were barred from the schools. He had been approached by many of his friends not to follow Christianity as it is a foreign religion. Since he did not listen to them, he was warned, "We will not allow a single Christian in Kandhamal." His response was simple: "Even if you kill me or my children before me, I will remain a Christian until my last breath." Then they said,

“He has gone mad.” All the attempts against him ended up in failure until the 2008 persecution. On the 24th Niladri and his family escaped to the mountain but could not be there for long due to the lack of food. He returned home four days later in the evening. Soon a mob of forty people came armed with wooden planks, iron rods, and swords, and some of them started throwing stones at him. Niladri says, “I kept quiet and watched them. Then, one rushed forward and hit me on the ear-side with a rod and I became unconscious. Later, my wife told me that they went on beating me with the rods and poured something into my eye before they left.” Having been tortured to such an extent on the next day he was still found alive. According to his conviction, he says, “Maybe, God wanted me to be alive to tell the story of this poor Christian. Otherwise, there cannot be any reason why I should be alive after so much beating” (Akkara, *Shining Faith* 20-28).

Threats

During the persecution, many people who had been “converted from Hinduism to Christianity turned back towards their old faith” because they were threatened with danger if they continued as Christians (Matthew 13). They were forced to deny their faith and told not to go to Church or take part in any church activities. Further, it was demanded that they should withdraw the complaints lodged with the police against Hindu mobs. The Christians not only suffered the loss of their properties, which were looted, but their churches had been forcefully converted into Hindu temples. The “churches were destroyed” and idols were placed, forcing Christians to worship those idols (Akkara, *Early Christians* 134-135). The conversion ceremonies were organized by fanatics. However, despite undergoing the conversion ritual, the Christians who remained steadfast in their faith had to face a social boycott and lived under constant threats (132).

Denial of Rights and Reconversion

The unwritten law claiming that Christians are foreigners was emphasized and kept Christians from any government benefits. This may have caused a large number of people to be reconverted to Hinduism. Enforcement was implied, and Christians were forced to be reconverted to Hinduism. Posters and wall writings asked Christians to convert to Hinduism. The appeal came as a threat stating, “if Christians want peace, then they must adopt Hinduism... if you will not adopt Hinduism then the district will continue to boil.” The other appeal was, “this is a Hindu country and only Hindu will stay here” (Kani, Parliament 23). Though the Christians left their houses and migrated from their villages, the threats continued. The Christians who dwelled in the relief camps were warned that unless they reconverted to Hinduism they could not return home. It did not make any sense, though the Prime Minister of India termed it a “National Shame” (“Forerunner” 1). When returning to the village, the social boycott was so strong that the Christians were restricted from common water sources and forest goods, and a large number of people depended on these common water sources and forest goods. The Christians were not given any work support, especially the reconstruction of their houses and farming. There was also no work offered by the landlords to Christians who had depended on daily labor as their livelihood. The crops that belonged to Christians were forcefully taken away by the local Hindus. The threats and conversion continued for a long period and in some areas still continue, even now.

The Causes of Riot

Violence has been a part of daily human life from the beginning of history. From “the earliest time, human beings have been driven by an innate destructive force” (Rolston 1). Violence is very much rooted in political, economic, and social

structures. The causes of riots differ from place to place even as the Kandhamal riot stands unique. One of the major reasons could be the rapid growth of Christians in Kandhamal district. On one hand, the riots never cease in Kandhamal Churches, and on the other hand, the number of Christians never ceased to grow to larger numbers. The growth of the Christian population became a living threat to the Hindu religious fanatics. The Christians were termed as foreigners, and Christianity considered a Western religion.

The history of Kandhamal also shows that the ideology of Hinduism has been enforced ever since Swami Lanxmananand arrived in Kandhamal in 1969. Since then RSS has been the most powerful body in the socio-political and religious spheres. The emphasis of Hindutva ideology has been on establishing a Hindu Raj in India with a form of government with a Hindu conception of politics and economy (Cherian 178). The Hindutva maintains the protection and promotion of Hindu culture and Hindu civilization for the advancement of Hindu Rashtra. They claim that all citizens living in India, irrespective of religion or creed, are Hindus. Hindustan is the land of Hindus, and all citizens must adopt the Hindu race, religion, culture, and language. Unless individuals abandon their differences with the Hindu understanding of culture, religion, and nation and adopt Hindu ideals, they will not be allowed to live in India.

The Role of Hindutva Forces in Kandhamal Riot

The riot took place in the Kandhamal District of Orissa, India and is an example of a bigger conspiracy of Hindu fanatics. Sangh Parivar leaders announced the plan to wipe out Christians from Kandhamal district. Addressing the media after he met with Sankaracharya, VHP leader Ashok Singhal said, “While the crucifixion of Jesus helped in spreading Christianity worldwide, the killing of Swami Lakshmanananda would end conversions and cow slaughter” (Kani, Conversion

Debate 32). The statement clearly implies a bigger involvement of Hindutva forces. The anti-Christian violence kindled by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and its allies has allowed the fury of Hindu Kandhas to run riot against Dalit Pana Christians. The Hindu organizations engaged in converting tribals to Hinduism accuse Christian missionaries of forcing the Dalit to covert (Kanungo 16). Hindutva ideology has been to propagate the false notion that Christianity is an enemy of Hinduism and India (Kuruvachira 118). Also, the Roman Catholic father notes that “When the Church makes the people aware of their dignity and gives them reliance the informer is attacked” (Bavandam 11). Under Hindu nationalist, the political wing of RSS, the Bharatiya Janata Party has often used the anti-conversion laws to target Christians, particularly among Dalits (Marshal 650). It has been clear evidence that the VHP and Bajrang Dal cadres have been organizing meetings with Kandha communities inciting them to attack the Christian houses.

Conversion

Kandhamal has a history of more than 500 years of Christian missionary presence. From the nineteenth century through creating educational institutions, both Roman Catholics and Protestant missionaries started their work in social involvement there (Jeyaraj 4), for example, there was a Baptist missionary who set up a school in 1914 at Gudripadi, G. Udayagiri (Boal 61). Today many mission organizations, including Indian Evangelical Mission (IEM), Friends Missionary Prayer Band (FMPB), and Christian organizations like World Vision, do work in this area. History records that in the past Christian Missions have made significant contributions to uplift the tribals who are downtrodden in the Kandhamal district. This continues today. Jeyaraj says, “Christian missions not only provide education and involvement in social activities, but they also do stand for justice and Christian values, and in

return, they face the target of Hindu fundamentalism” (Jeyaraj 4). The Christian missionaries have offered schools, colleges, professional institutions, hospitals, orphanages, social welfare centers, and shelter homes for the destitute. Along with all these activities, missionary activities continue among the other faiths. Though the activities by Christian organizations are significant, they have been accused of carrying out illegal conversions in Kandhamal. There have been many accusations against Christians, even by government officers, suggesting that the Panos and Kandhs became Christian through pressure from European missionaries. David Griffiths citing from Barbara M. Boal in the book *The Kandh: Human Sacrifice and Religious Change* mentions that,

The Pana Christian’s statement about their conversion experience:

Our chief concern has always been with anything that helps us to get the bare necessities of life, and as the missionaries didn’t consider us untouchable, Panas began to become Christians to get their help....Roman Bastray, a survivor of a communal attack in Kandhamal in 1988 who was born in a Christian family, is recorded in a separate account, saying, “There were widespread discrimination and untouchability in the area,” but with education, the status of Panas improved, and “This newfound confidence led many Dalits to become Christians” (Griffiths 26).

Bansidhara Dash says, “from the Sixteenth-century missionaries have been working among Dalits in Kandhamal” (Dash 12). They have established schools and hospitals, and they served among the leprous and disabled. Thus they have been contributing to the development of society. Dalits get education, medical facilities, and work for their livelihood through the contribution of those Christian welfare

Organizations. For centuries the minorities, Dalits in Kandhamal have become the targets of social discrimination and economically marginalized. Certainly, there is no question of using force or allurements to convert any tribe to the Christian faith (Panikar 31). However, the question has been always raised about the identity of so-called tribal Hindus, who are truly not Hindus but animists (Kumar 42). Forced conversion is a contradiction to the Christian principles themselves. David Griffith, quoting from Boal, notes the “typical” community-based decision-making process which preceded their entry into the church:

First the elders and people of the village gather together to consider the matter. They may talk for many hours, discussing in a practical rather than a theological vein; “It is best for our *negi ava* (group wellbeing)... that we become Christians – or not?” This precipitated a period of inquiry and learning, culminating in eventual baptism. Boal reported a range of different reasons for Kandhas’ conversion. Social reasons played a role: for an illiterate youth, touching “the Book” was significant; for some women, it was the relief of knowing their men were kept sober. Principally, though, it was their “dissatisfaction with the old religion,” particularly the financial burden of ritual. The new deity bore appeal, as “Salvation presence”; he could be prayed to even in the jungle. In her portrayal of Kandh conversions, Boal identified them as transitional, helping the tribe “to adapt to social-religious change (Griffiths 27).

Unlike any other religion, Christians do witness their faith before other faiths. The freedom to profess, practice, and propagate one’s faith is guaranteed by the Indian constitution as one of the fundamental rights in the Article 25. In contrast, Kani

claims that the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) is functioning as a mother institution operating through hundreds of front organizations both in India and abroad (Kani, Parliament 23).

Political Reasons

Throughout history, it has been evident that the cause of Christian riots is connected with political motivation. This is also true in the case of the riot in Kandhamal in 2008. After the riot of 2007 in Kandhamal, the political leadership and the Government of Orissa BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) and BJD (Biju Janata Dal) took primarily two issues, "Conversion" and "Cow Slaughter," for their political votes among the Hindus to create hatred between the Hindu and Christian communities. In this political polarization, BJP has been working among the Tribals influencing and campaigning against their Christian neighbors. The Tribal backward people have been kept, and as they worked under the Hindus and upper-caste leaders, they were obliged to those leaders. In contrast, tribal believers have been taught to read and write by Christian agencies. As a result, the Christian tribals are more independent than the tribal Hindus who have been suppressed by the Hindu upper caste leaders. Perhaps this difference between Christians and Hindu tribals arouses jealousy and anger in upper-caste Hindus. In this particular political climate, Laxamanananda was shot dead on August 24, 2008. The blame was put upon the Christians, and a *bandh* (shutdown) was called by Hindu organizations supported by the then-ruling state BJD Government. With this blame on Christians and with the support of state police, Hindu fanatics started a riot in the district. As a result, the Christians became prey to the Hindu fundamentalists. The riot forced Christians to flee for their lives from their dwelling places. In the later period, they were restored to the relief camps under the protection of the police. Nevertheless, the mob did their work freely. The rioters

frightened people, looted their possessions, burnt the houses, raped a woman, and did not hesitate to kill Christians brutally. The political motivation was evident when Manoj Pradhan, accused of murder and inciting riot, was given a BJP Member of Legislative Assembly seat while he was in the prison for these accusations.

Socio-Economic Causes

The riot not only left the victims with a political impact, but the Christians were largely affected by the socio-economic losses. One of the key reasons for the riot was to bring socio-economically established Christians into crisis by destroying their property and belongings. With the help of Christian missions to Kandhamal, tribals have access to education but have converted to Christianity. They have also lost the benefits of reservation, which is reserved for Hindu Dalits only. However, the Christians have seen increasing prosperity after they converted to Christianity and are emerging as a developed community. Perhaps the upper and middle caste Hindus, as well as Sangh Parivar Leaders, see the development of the Christian Panas and Kandh community as a threat to their dominion. They find it hard to accept that the Panas, who were once untouchables, are now getting educated and are claiming their constitutional rights. It is also speculated by the Hindus that Christians are being sponsored by the Churches and are now well developed in comparison to their Hindu neighbors.

Impact of the Violence in Kandhamal

The two phases of the Kandhamal riot in 2007 and 2008 caused great damage to the Christian living in Kandhamal. Government statistics show that more than 600 villages were ransacked; 5600 houses were looted and later burnt; 38 people were murdered (Uddalak Mukherjee report says 75-100 people were murdered), and 54000 people were left homeless. However human rights activists estimated over 100 deaths,

including children, women, persons with disabilities, and older persons. There are a large number of Christians who suffered severe physical injuries and mental traumas. There were reports that a few women had been sexually assaulted and intimidated. At least thirteen schools, colleges, and non-profit offices were also reported to be damaged. About 30,000 people were uprooted and dwelled in relief camps for over six months. Some of the families dispersed and never returned to their villages due to the frequent threats they received. At the same time, more than 10,000 children had their education severely disrupted due to displacement and fear (“Unjust Compensation”). Over 2000 children from Kandhamal missed their class 10th examination. Himansu Dhawan, the Times of India journalist, notes that over 23,000 students had to flee from their homes due to fear and threats from rioters (Dhawan 11).

Spiritual Impact on the Christians

In the spiritual and religious realm, the post-riot left the Christians with both immediate and gradual impacts.

Immediate Impacts

The riot left the Christians dispersed and questioning their faith and the veracity of God’s existence. Almost 30% of the believers stopped attending church after the outbreak of the riot. There were villages where Christians were fewer in number, and they completely stopped attending Church services. In some areas churches were closed down. This kind of absence in the church had a further psychological and spiritual impact on those remaining. They were discouraged both by the riot itself as well as by the response of those who stayed away. The report indicates that 90% of believers stopped taking part in church activities, such as cottage meetings, prayer meetings, having fellowship with other fellow believers, and

taking care of one another and the spiritual and physical needs of their fellow Christians. The record shows that 80% stopped witnessing due to riots as well. Further, the believers underwent a spiritual crisis finding no desire for Bible reading and praying. Due to these events, over 2000 people denounced their Christian faith (“Unjust Compensation”). On the other hand, one of the immediate impacts was that there were some Christians who were ready to face such riots for their faith.

Gradual Impacts

Though the short-term impact on the church was negative, the gradual impact could be seen as a positive one. There is no doubt that the riot resulted in bringing spiritual strength to the believers. Soon after the attacks took place, the leaders of the church gathered and ministered to those who were in their relief camps. The prayer for them supplied their physical need and sought legal help from the Government for protection. The church unity remained of the essence, particularly in areas of mobilizing defense of Christians. Sometimes these actions strengthened the believers, and it seemed that the situation brought back normalcy. This riot also caused the believers to witness their faith by strengthening the faiths of nominal Christians to be committed fully to the Lord.

Social Impact on Christians

The Christians have been treated without dignity or respect and treated as the object of anger. After being persecuted by Hindu fundamentalists, the Christian community still faces opposition and discrimination by family members, relatives, and villagers. In some cases, Christians were not allowed to draw water from the community well. Some were not even allowed to fetch firewood from the jungle. Some believers were beaten up by the family members, relatives, and villagers for not denying their faith. In the case of Tribal converted Christians, they were treated very

badly by the Hindu fundamentalists because of their non-cooperation in the worship of family gods and goddesses and refusing to follow their culture and practices.

However, Christians truly reflected Christian love throughout the persecution.

Economic Impact of Christians

The persecution brought severe damage to the Christian community. The Christian community lost their shops; their property was looted, and domestic animals such as chicken, goats, and cows were taken. Most of the Christians, as they moved to shelter in the camps, had all of their household things stolen leaving the houses empty, destroyed, or burnt to ashes. The economic impact can be seen in how the Hindu mob targeted the shops, which Christians had started for their livelihood. Christians who were very poor and were working as daily laborers also faced severe economic scarcity. The persecution forced daily laborers to migrate to places where they could find work and survive with the whole family.

Psychological Impact

The Christian society suffered from gradual psychological trauma faced by victim-survivors. They kept receiving threats, intimidation, and insecurity and were frequently warned that as a condition of their return home they must accept the Hindu faith. Though the persecution on the ground was over, the social, financial, and safety impact concerned every Christian all the more. Premanand Nayak writes in the book "In Kandhamal":

There is also ongoing psychological violence among the victims of the violence as they face socio-economic boycott in their villages, loss of livelihood, displacement and lack of security, coercion not to give evidence against the perpetrators in the fast track courts, and threats of future attacks (Nayak 119).

Though some of the Christians returned home, they still live in fear and trauma. Organizing any prayer fellowships and Christian faith-related activities has been risky.

Relief and Response from Various Corners

As the riot subsided the victims found responses found from several corners. The riot was not just a concern for Christians; it became a concern for government, NGOs, media, church, and the Sangh Parivar itself. They all played various roles to uplift and manipulate this incident. Before highlighting these responses, it is fair to highlight the impact.

The Government Response

The constitution guarantees freedom of religion and mandates a secular state. The government should be the custodian of each individual without any religious impartiality and should prohibit discrimination based on religion (“International Religious Freedom”). However, the threats from fanatics were repeatedly reported to the government both by the individual Christians and the Christian communities, to the bane of VHP, RSS, and *Bajrang Dal*, under the Rule of Law but the carelessness was evident (“Letter to President”). The government has shown its resentment towards the Christian community (“Report of Anti-Christian Violence”). Various witnesses report that though there was repeated communication to the government, the response of the government at large was nonexistent and irresponsible. There was a repeated claim of Maoists taking responsibility for killing Swami, yet the government left the Christian community vulnerable. As a result, due to this riot over 5600 people's houses were destroyed. The compensation towards the damages of property that the government of Odisha provided was Rs. 10,000 for fully damaged houses and Rs. 20,000 for partially damaged houses. The compensation provided by

the state for house damage was extremely low compared to actual loss incurred. It has been reported by CSNR (Centre for the Sustainable Use of Natural and Social Resources) that 5% of the families that lost their homes had still not received compensation by 2013 (“Unjust Compensation”). The houses which were partially damaged later collapsed due to heavy rain while the victim-survivors were in relief camps. Unfortunately, such matters were not taken into consideration by the government. As a result, such houses were considered “half-damaged,” and the affected families received only Rs. 10,000 from the state government and Rs. 20,000 from the central government as compensation. However, in many cases, the victim-survivors have not received the central government compensation of Rs. 200,000 (Akkara, *Who Killed Swami* 49-51). Besides this, on October 20th, 2008, the Odisha government stoutly rejected the church demand for Rs. three crores for the reconstruction of damaged and demolished churches in Kandhamal. The government also said that giving grants to religious building is against its secular ethos (Akkara, *Kandhamal a Blot* 50). The victims also lost their personal belongings, valuable household items, important documents, and livelihood-related resources. The government has never considered these losses and their concerns. When asked to compensate for those households and other items, the district administration of Kandhamal stated that “for such losses the government doesn’t have any policies to enumerate.” The role of the government should be reestablishing the situation and restablizing the Christian communities. However, no such positive action has been evident from the government. The gross repair has impeded the housing rights of the affected families (“Unjust Compensation”). A CSNR report states that as many as 130 shopkeepers lost their livelihood due to the destruction of their shops. Unfortunately,

their loss has never been considered by the government except a few unmatched compensations for house damage.

The main office of Catholic Charity Jan Vikas at Nuagam had suffered damage of over Rs. 50 lakhs that included movable and unmovable property. It looked like the government was fast in assessing the damage, and though the government allocated 15.19lakh as compensation to 72 damaged churches and Christian institutions, they were not given any of those compensations. However, the report suggests that the government paid a compensation of Rs. 20,000 to the Divyajyoti Pastoral Centre (DPC) as consolation for the Rs. 50 lakh damage it suffered in three rounds of an arson attack on the center (Akkara, Kandhamal a Blot 53).

The government claims at least 827 FIRs, who should be arrested and facing imprisonment. However, the government claimed to have arrested 634 persons in Kandhamal by mid-October. As of the record on July 5th, 2009, though there were 11,500 names mentioned in the FIRs consisting of 827 cases, only 679 people had been arrested (Akkara, Kandhamal a Blot 59).

The NGOs Response

Though there were several pleas to the government for the Christians to be protected no positive action was taken by the government. In the later part, the Rapid Reaction and Central Paramilitary Forces were deployed in the district, but they were stationed to protect official buildings in towns rather than the communities most at risk (Genocide in Kandhamal 9). After the riot, the NGOs tried to actively participate and help the needy, and instead they were restricted completely. The report of “Human Rights Law Network” states that:

Following the Christian riots, charitable organizations and NGOs sought permission from the District Magistrate (DM) to carry out basic relief works operations. This offer, however, was declined. The DM and Collector issued an order on 11 January 2008 to all Sub-Collectors on the subject of relief work to the affected people of Kandhamal with the direction that no charitable or religious or non-government organizations be allowed to carry out any relief work and that action under the Indian Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Code would be initiated against those violating this direction. (Genocide in Kandhamal 10)

Special Leave Petition filed in March 2008 – Archbishop Cheenath of Cuttack, Bhubaneswar challenged the ruling of the High Court denying the right of charitable organizations and NGOs to provide relief to the victims of the December riots. The Supreme Court stayed this decision (Genocide in Kandhamal 29). On the other hand, the Government kept promising to render their service to the victims. In November 2008, a team of lawyers from HRLN and social activists Jan Vikas lead by Colin Gonsalves, Senior Advocate met the collector of the district and Superintendent of Police inquiring about the condition of the post-riot situation, and the report was considered satisfactory. However, a visit to the relief camps revealed a much more complex and gloomy picture. Though the government officials claimed to establish the peace committees among the Hindu and Christian victims, for each peace committee the condition placed was, “withdraw their criminal complaints against the criminals or convicts and return home as a Hindu” (Genocide in Kandhamal 13).

The Media Response

The news not only subsidized the riot; it became a means to instigate the rioters. Some media were truly motivated by the VHP and RSS, and part of the media was true to its presentation. The local media reported that the VHP played a major role in the riot spread. “The Samaj” a local newspaper on December 30, 2007, reported that:

On 25th evening more than 3000 supporters of VHP and RSS came to Barakhama with weapons and lathis (sticks). They began with looting and ended with damaging property. The houses of 285 Christians were burnt within an hour. 215 houses were half-burnt or damaged. Lakhs of rupees, golden ornaments, and costly home appliances were looted.

Even the pet animals were not spared. (Kandhamal Riot and Mass...)

Most of the TV channels of Odisha, such as ETV, OTV, and Doordarshan, and the Oriya dailies failed to analyze the causes of the riot. They also alleged that Christians were the reason for the riot. Arun K Patnaik and Rajesh Bag in the article Dialogue, Sacrifice, and Reconciliation state that, “on 24th evening the ETC Odia spread a missive rumor blaming Christians of assaulting Swami on his way to visit Bamunigaon. They hold the Christian youths in Dasingbadi responsible for assaulting Swami. Perhaps this caused unrest among the communities and the mob attacks were initiated on Christian communities” (Patnaik, Bag “Dialogue”). Having seen the business, some Christian organizations stated that, since the local media is in the hands of the high caste Hindus, the Christian minority has not gotten its due. The media exaggeratedly presented the attack on Swami. Unfortunately, the journalists canonized the words of Swamiji, and the voice of Christians was not heard. Perhaps the riot was given a communal color, and the context of persecution was completely

legalized and permissive. The statements of Swami and the leaders at Sangh Parivar occupied a prominent position in the news reports. The statements of the affected Christians have been deliberately ignored. On the other hand, all the national dailies which have local editions gave importance to the statements of the government officials (Mishra, “Kandhamal Riot”). Reporter Kedar Mishra states that “the newspapers have continuously printed opinions, thoughts and advertisements of the VHP, the Bajrang Dal and all other similar organizations in such a manner as if these were opinions of the newspapers themselves” (Mishra).

The Church Response

There were several Church bodies across the world that pitched into the riot-affected areas with help and support. Samuel Kobia, the general secretary of the World Council of Churches, the largest Church body in the world, received some assurances after the Catholic Church contacted the Prime Minister of India. As a response, the Prime Minister pointed out that the Indian constitution “guarantees freedom to practice and propagate one’s faith” and assured to restore the dispersed ones (Akkara, *Kandhamal a Blot* 55). Sadly, the killing and threats to Christians and the threats to the community persist even now (55-56). Junos Digal, one of the rioters, says that,

We harassed them and destroyed their houses. But they have no hatred or anger against us... They are still suffering. But they have no complaints and they are living happily. There is certainly something special about how their faith enables them to overcome difficulties.

This has brought me here. (Akkara, *Early Christians* 144)

Church leaders have been helpless since they have not been heard by the government. Premanand Nayak reports that, “the Catholic Bishops” called for all

Catholic educational institutions to remain closed for several days in protest against the ongoing violence against the Christians of Kandhamal. To condemn the violence protests were organized by Catholic dioceses on their respective dioceses (Nayak 89). On August 27th, 2008 Pope Benedict XVI expressed his solidarity and condemned the Kandhamal violence. He expressed his great sorrow over the violence against the Christian community in Odisha (Nayak 190). The executive body of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India expressed its disappointment because no corresponding action was taken by the government to put an end to the violence (190-191). The Catholic body also demanded a ban on groups who take the law in their hands and give justice to the ones who lost their lives.

The churches of Kandhamal have failed to respond against the violence. Premananda Nayak lists some of the failings of the Christian Community's response. Even now they are not aware of the steps they are supposed to taking. The following are a few points:

1. Though the anti-Christian activities and violence have taken place for over four decades, the Christians have had a do not care attitude.
2. Though there were frequent communal tensions between Hindus and Christians, no initiative has ever been taken by any Christian individual or Christian community to talk it out.
3. Perhaps the Christian community lived an unrealistic life that caused the other community to suspect and feel envious of Christians.
4. Since both communities like the Kandhs and Panas lived together and shared their daily lives, the relationship between the two did not remain healthy. For example, the exclusive nature of the Church created a feeling of alienation and misunderstanding with the Hindus. They even suspected the

accountability and transparency of the foreign funds of the Church which were used for social and charitable works.

5. Since the relationship between Tribal Kandhs and Christians became fragile, the fundamentalists took advantage and created bitterness among these two communities, especially about issues like land acquisition and reservation of panos.

There are many more issues that could be addressed regarding the failure of the Church toward the riot and persecution of 2008.

The Sangh Parivar Response

Earlier the Swami made a statement, “There is no use of burning tires on the road. Tell me, how many houses of the Christians you have brunt? There will be no peace without revolution.” (Pati, “Next Stop Orissa”). After the death of Swami, the Sangh Parivar used the local media. They argued that it was caste based and that it was not communal. At the time of the riot, the Sangh Parivar demanded the arrest of Radhakant Nayak (the previous administrator and present Congress M. P.) who was staying at Delhi. The ex-minister Padmanav Behera, who was made a scapegoat, was not given adequate scope to express his opinion (Mishra, “Kandhamal Riot”). The Sangh Parivar acted as state machinery in dictating the legal system of Kandhamal and Orissa.

Research Design Literature

The researcher analysed the post-riot status of the church at Kandhamal. It has been twelve years since the riot against the Christian community started in Kandhamal. It requires a careful look and special consideration of the church for her better situation in the future. TM Sensing says, “projects are not designed just to

understand phenomena but to provide the minister an opportunity to impart pastoral leadership that implements change” (Sensing 63).

Though this riot in Kandhamal appears to be a result of faith conflict, it is also communal conflict. The question arises that if it was truly communal, why only Christians were targeted despite the Christian believers being either from Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste community. It needs to be looked into very carefully to find the real truth to help the church destabilized from its lost state.

This research used the intervention method where questionnaires were used with both quantitative or closed-ended questions and qualitative or open-ended questions (Sensing 91). Sensing further says “the questions included must be the ones that look back in retrospective; look inwards at their breakthroughs and look forward with of hope” (Sensing 108). The researcher chose the interview method because as Patton states, “we interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe... we cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions” (Sensing 104).

The project deals with the experience and challenges the Christian Church experienced in post-riot 2008 and the effect of the riot on the church and its growth in the past 12 years. The researcher chose Christian leaders and the believers of Kandhamal district to find their opinion. By assessing the collected data, the researcher was able to provide some suggestions that could play a key role for the church to remain unshaken.

Summary of the Literature Review

Riots/persecutions are a common phenomenon in Odisha, especially in the District of Kandhamal. The subject of persecution dominates a substantial part of both the Old and the New Testament. It occurred against Jews for their faith in Yahweh,

and it also was prevalent during the first century. The persecution occurred outside of the home and in the home itself in some cases. The outcome has been “seed sowing,” though the experience was in no way pleasant. Though its intensity is reduced at some times, the persecution has not ceased throughout the centuries since the church was born.

The arrival of the Hindutva movement has played a divisive role with two communities who had been leaning together for centuries. The dwellers in Kandhamal were gentle, cordial, hospitable, and respectable with each other. However, the arrival of Swami Laxamananda influenced the innocent animist dwellers to accept the Hindu faith and hate Christians. Due to their minority status, Christians became victims at the hands of fanatics. The Hindu fanatics established several organizations, and two of them are crucial: RSS and VHP. These radical organizations consisting of fanatics with radical mindsets who kept influencing other local dwellers of the District. The innocent ones of the district, especially the tribals, fall prey to those crafty minds. Their philosophy was to impose “gharvapati,” which simply means people who go into the Christian faith have to return to the Hindu faith again. This became their movement to influence, and they functioned as missionary movements with the conspiracy of “gharvapati” philosophy. They captured the youth as their missionaries to reach out to the Christians. At the same time, Laxmanananda also became a cause of ethnic conflict between Kandhs (ST) and Panos Christians (SC). He worked as a representative of Kandhs before the government. As a result, the movement began, and Christians were projected as foreigners who settled in Kandhamal. The conflicts over the churches and Christians increased day by day, and the 2008 riot was its climax.

The 2008 attack was planned to create communal tension between two groups, the Hindus and the Christians. Sasi states, “the hate campaign against Christians in Kandhamal began in the late 1960s and it continues even today.” The local priests, nuns, and Christian leaders are the key victims of anti-Christian violence. There have been frequent attacks from time to time though they are not reported in the day-to-day reports. There is no doubt that the bureaucrats have taken political advantage of such situations. Akkara records “there were at least 170 cases registered in the police station against the rioters but found none of them guilty and were just set free. Though several people were arrested, later were set free stating there is no evidence to prosecute them.” As a result, many of the Christians left their villages and migrated to safe places where they found the security of life.

The violence continued for a long period. The quietness of government enhanced the radical growth in Kandhamal, and minority Christian have been persecuted frequently. Reconversion to Hinduism became a feature of the 2008 communal violence in Kandhamal. The tribal Hindus had been provoked by politicians and bureaucrats. The slogans against Christians such as “Jay Sri Ram... Jay Bajrang Bali... Wipeout Christians” resounded in every corner of the District. The attacks upon Christian houses, churches, and schools kept them destroyed. The administration remained a spectator taking no action on anything. As one of the reports says, human loss and suffering became cold government statistics. The statistics have also been manipulated. There were cases reported such as houses burnt, property destroyed, women raped, and people killed, but the media coverage was one-sided, and nothing was reported with substantial accuracy.

The impact of persecution in 2008 was large upon the Christians. Though it was far higher than projected by the government, the statistics show that more than

600 villages were ransacked; 5600 houses were looted and later burned; 36 people were murdered, and 54000 people were left homeless. At least 13 schools, colleges, and offices of several non-profit organizations were also reported to be damaged. About 30,000 people were uprooted and lived in relief camps for over six months, and over 10,000 children had their education severely disrupted.

This not only impacted normal life, but church activities were paralyzed for a longer period. Even now they are still not functioning in some places. One report says that 90% of believers stopped taking part in church activities, such as cottage meetings, prayer meetings, fellowship with each other, and Sunday services for a large period. Due to the violence over 2000 people denounced their Christian faith. The Christians were socially, and as a community, isolated from free access to water resources and basic things needed for survival. Persecution broke down their economic status as most of them lost their property and domestic animals. The victims are psychologically traumatized even as they kept receiving threats, intimidation from surroundings that kept making their survival uncomfortable. There was no one to help, especially as the church was completely broken down, and NGOs were not given permission to extend their help to the needy.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter considers the three research questions with brief descriptions. The chapter also looks at the background and the context of the Kandhamal district, especially of the existence of the Christian church in Kandhamal. As the condition of the church is considered, the criteria for the participants have been set forth. The researcher describes the methodology he used to collect the data required to address the three research questions. This chapter focuses on the Christians as they experienced riots at an individual level. To study the subject proposed, the researcher used only the interview method of approach to collect the data and gather information. The researcher made an effort to meet individually with each of the participants, and there are a series of questions the researcher prepared for the project. There are both quantitative and qualitative questions to collect the data from the participants. This research is considered the field research since written information is absent. About 20-25 Christian leaders were invited for the one-on-one interviews, and 25-30 laypersons and believers were invited, especially the ones who were victims of the riot and persecution.

Nature and Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to analyze the current state of the Christian churches in Kandhamal following the 2008 riot to make recommendations for the restoration of the believers. Few other caste people dwell in Kandhamal, but they are largely known as minorities since they are considered to be non-natives. Among these two religious groups, Hindu and Christians, the majority of the Christians belongs to the Scheduled Caste are largely educated due to early arrival and acceptance of the

Christian faith. There are also a good number of Scheduled Tribe who were educated after they converted to Christianity, but their simple lifestyle keeps them in slow growth to advance their social life in Kandhamal. This does not nullify the poor education status of Hindus.

The advantage for both tribes of being a part of the church is that they largely do not discriminate against each other after they are accepted by the Lord, although it is a very sharply divided and discriminatory society outside the church and Christian community. The lifestyle and very practices of SC and ST largely differ from each other in their day-to-day practices. The church has maintained and taught a balanced life between both of these castes and the classes of people in the church. However, due to the social order the division in society is very strong, especially among Hindus. The simple lifestyle of ST has let others take advantage of them, and they are often manipulated by other so-called Hindu faith groups. The Schedule Tribe are known as animistic in their faith. They worship nature, spirits, forefathers, and no idols at all. However, now having been manipulated by the imported sophisticated Hindu faith, the tribals have lost their practices and their identity as well. Having joined with the Christian community their educational status changed, and the church influenced the locals not only with their Christian faith but with a holistic lifestyle, which includes their social, ethical, educational, and economic growth.

The focus of the research is to look at the condition of the church. After the riot against the local Christians in 2008, the church had to undergo dispersion due to the attacks and the fear of life. The believers lost their property; houses were burnt; people were attacked, and some were burnt alive for their faith in Christ. The 2008 riot is considered one of the most large-scale riots India has ever witnessed. The riot continued for days, weeks, and months, and in some places the bitterness is felt even

now. As a result of the riot, Christians were dispersed from their homes, and some lived in the mountains for days together. People escaped from the towns and found new ways of life. A large number of people who were affected by the riot had to shelter for days or months in refugee camps built by the Government and NGOs. However, they were all shut down in a few months. Some people returned home, and a few did not due to threats on their lives. Due to the loss of property, there was nothing left behind at home since everything was destroyed by the rioters. As the months and years passed, restoration of the economy, social lifestyle, and community is evident, but the church seems left out without any such restoration steps taken. For social, economic, and community restoration the government took initiative, and some leaders from both sides perhaps felt it to be settled. However, threats and fear of a repetition of riot keep believers in a lukewarm dilemma. It is also evident that most of the locals permitted Christians to return to their village with conditions that they renounce their Christian faith and join with the Hindu faith. That process is known as “Ghar Wapsi” (Returning Home). The whole idea of Ghar Wapsi is to receive a person back home who has been lost in the Christian faith and now is reconsidering the old Hindu faith by going through some rituals. With such stringent agreements believers had to return home and remained unable to practice their Christian faith out of fear. There are some church buildings left without restoration due to lack of financial support. And a few buildings have been converted into idol worship centers. It sounds there is a desire in the believer to return to the church, yet the fear of life binds them not to return to the church. This research focuses on the status of the church. The researcher is convinced that, besides all the general reasons, there may be something keeping the church from being restored. The researcher wishes to find the causes of the lack of restoration of the church and to help the church to get restored by

providing certain principles that could be vitally helpful for the church to remain strengthened even when persecution or riots looms upon it in the future.

Research Questions

The research addresses three questions about the proposed subject. The first question considers the perspective of media and other local sources and how they consider this riot/persecution in the Kandhamal context. The second question addresses the perspective of the church leaders and laypeople, especially believers. The third question addresses strategy and considers how to help Christian leaders restore the church.

Research Question #1: How do the media and other local sources describe the impact of the 2008 riot on society in general and the Christian church specifically in the district of Kandhamal?

It is an open truth that the riot was against the Christian community, but the media says something different. Hence it is important to consider what the media and other local sources say to further understand the wider aspects of the riot. For collecting this information, the researcher found newspapers or magazine cut-outs and tried to speak with a few legal experts (journalists).

Research Question #2: How do church leaders and laypeople describe the impact of the 2008 riot on the Christian Church in the district of Kandhamal?

The church leaders and laypeople are the victims of the riot. They experienced the loss of wealth and lives of dear ones, and it would be appropriate to listen to them as first-hand resource information. The researcher selected participants who were part of the riot and experienced great loss during this riot in Kandhamal in 2008.

Research Question #3: What strategy could be implemented to help Christian church leaders bring about the restoration of the Christian Church and draw in dispersed believers?

Looking at the past, the 2008 riot was not new to the Church at Kandhamal. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the state of Orissa is one of the first states in India to pass an anti-conversion bill in 1969. Ever since, the persecution at the local level and the district level has been frequent and 2008 was no exception. It is important to define a strategy to implement a pattern or model for the Church creating and defining a certain method that could help the Church remain intact. The researcher looked at any existing methods. The researcher having considered the first two research questions and their outcomes defines a proposal that may help the Church remain hopeful in the future. This question would also reflect the Biblical and theological response toward religious riot according to the defined method from the Bible. Finally, the researcher will propose a method based on results from the participants' opinions and the Biblical perspective for the betterment of the Church at Kandhamal.

Ministry Context

Geography

Kandhamal District in the State of Orissa is one of the most beautiful places. The district is located in the heart of Orissa stretching between 19°34 and 20°36 north latitude and 83°34 and 84°34 east longitude with an area of 7649 Sq. Km. Out of this, 5709.83 Sq. Km is covered by forest (Kandhamal). Comparing to the size of the area there are not many people living in this place. The entire district lies in the high altitude zone with areas of inaccessible terrain of hilly ranges and narrow valley tracts, which guides the socio-economic conditions of people and development of the district. More than 50% of the population constitutes the ST community of

Description	Numbers	Description	Numbers
Area	7649 Sq. Km.	Sub-Divisions	2
No. of Tahasils	12	No. of Zilla Parishad	18
No. of Panchayat Samiti	12	No. of Gram Panchayats	171
No. of Municipal Corporation	1	No. of Notified Area Council	2
Population	7,33,110	No. of Villages	2,515
Total Males (Population)	3,59,945	Total Females (Population)	3,73,165
Urban Males (Population)	36,422	Urban Females (Population)	35,857
Rural Males (Population)	3,23,523	Rural Females (Population)	3,37,308
Population Males (SC)	15.83 % [56,987]	Population Females (SC)	15.69 % [58,557]
Population Males (ST)	52.93 % [1,90,506]	Population Females (ST)	54.22 % [2,02,314]
Literacy Rate Males	76.93 % [2,33,900]	Literacy Rate Females	51.94% [1,65,886]
Sex Ratio (Females per 1000 males)	1037	Density (Total Persons per sq km)	91

Table 3: 1 (Demography)

aboriginal tribal races (Table 3:1). Overall, the district is ranked as a backward district in the state of Orissa, India, (Kandhamal). The population is smaller, and the people who live here are not very educated. Very few people live in an urban atmosphere. There are only two towns and 2,515 villages in Kandhamal District. Most of the people live in the villages. They like living in the village more than in the cities. The

temperature of the district is recorded as 42.6 max and 1.3 min centigrade. The rainfall of the district is recorded as 1754.7mm (Ave) (Kandhamal).

Politics and Social

Political Status (Table 3:1)

The Kandhamal district is one of the more backward districts in Orissa. The political condition of this district is not sound, and yet it cannot be neglected. The district is rural. The political condition of the place is very general, with the plans and aim of an active role in rural planning and administration. Political acts mainly play an effective role in the lives of rural people. Zilla Parishad (District Council) of Panchayat Raj plays an active role in developing the local central atmosphere. Besides this, it also acts as an executive agency for area development programs in the infrastructure and social service sectors. The political body is an advisory body at the district level to advise the government in all developmental matters relating to the district. There are twelve Panchayat Samities in the district. Every Panchayat Samiti is responsible for the progress of the communities (Singh, "Golden Research Thoughts"). The panchayat samiti is under the custody of elected Sarapancha, and he also functions as the head of the Panchyat Samiti (Singh). The chairman is the head of the body and is elected directly by the Panchyat Samiti members. The main functions of the Panchyat Samities are planning, executing, and supervising all developmental programs under the jurisdiction of the Block. It also supervises the works of Gram Panchayats within its jurisdiction ("Zilla Parishad Responsibility"). The Sarapancha (elected legislator) is the head, and his decision is always considered as the final decision for all the steps that the villagers take. In social life, the Sarapancha plays a vital role in building society. He is considered the highest authority in the lives of the

people in society. The financial condition of the district is not sound; it differs from place to place.

Social

The social status of people of Kandhamal is very high. They used to have get-togethers, where they could come together to express their feelings and get to know each other. The people of this district are very friendly and generous. They enjoy sharing their possessions with others, not thinking of tomorrow. There cannot be seen as much partiality as justice.

Ethnographic Record

The major people groups are the Kandhas and Panos. There are differences found among them. However, though there are differences, they live together breaking through all the barriers and differences. Different authorities on the identity of Kandhas have given different views. Dalton describes the Kandhas as tall as average Hindus and much darker in complexion. McPherson described the Kandhas as faithful friends, devoted to their chiefs, resolute, brave, hospitable, and laborious (Ratha, "Development and Cultural Change"). The Panos considered them as outsiders who came to this district and settled down several years ago. The outward appearance and their activities distinguish Kandhas and Panos. Most of the Panos are considered to be Christians.

Education

The majority of the populations in the surveyed villages of six districts of four different geographical features are illiterate and less qualified (Kandhamal). There are no facilities where people can educate themselves, although there are some non-formal teaching centers found in a few places. From a statistical viewpoint, it is very significant that most of the Panos are better educated than the Kandhas. Females are

given less importance in society, especially in the educational sectors. They are not encouraged to pursue their education. Especially in the Kandha sects women are preferred to be housewives than to become educated. In the Pano sects, women are not deprived as Kandhas and are given more opportunities.

Culture and Religion

Cultural Status and Language

Kandhamal district is filled up with multiracial groups. The main two major groups are called *Kandhas* and *Panos*. The word *Kandha* is spelled in a variety of ways, including *Kond*, *Khond*, and *Kandha*. They identify themselves as *Kuilaku* or *Kuinga*. The language they speak is the *Kui* language, which has no script. The *Kui* language is one of the oldest languages. Almost 90% of people in the district communicate in the *Kui* language (Kandha, “Sch. Caste”).

The Kandhas are identified from their names. Some writers have attempted to trace out the Telugu derivation from the word *Konda* which means *feels*. Those living on the hilltops are named Kandha. It is a fact that the Kandhas like to live on hilltops and their subject people the Panos like to live beneath their settlement. The common surnames of Kandhas are Pradhan, Mallick, Konhar, and Majhi, and their deities have surnames like Dehury, Jharkar, and Jani (“Tribes of Orissa”)

Food

Kandhas eat rice with boiled green leaves and vegetables. They eat soup made of leaves with rice and use *peja* (gruel of rice) as a sick diet. They are very fond of meat for social and religious functions but do not take beef. Fish is taken when available. They smoke and chew tobacco leaves. Both men and women excessively consume *Salapa* and *Mohula* liquor on all occasions.

The Religious Status of Society

In the census of 2011 (Table 3:2, 3:3), the major religions in this place were the animistic religion and later Christianity. A small number of Muslims are also seen in the district. There was no such religion as Hinduism. Speculating on the present context, Hinduism is the dominant religion in the district.

District	Kandhamal	District	Kandhamal
Population	733,110	Sikh	0.01%
Hindu	79.16%	Buddhist	0.04%
Christian	20.31%	Jain	0.01%
Muslim	0.29%	Others	0.18%

Table 3:2 Religious Statistics in Kandhamal (“Census 2011”)

The people who live here are very religious, and they mainly emphasize the animal or bird sacrifice and blood offering in their worship. There were human sacrifices that existed in the past. They believe in sacrifice and appeasing their goddesses. They have lots of sacred religious places where they go for their worship, and they do that

Towns	Majority Religion	Hindu	Christian
Phulbani	Hindu	95.31%	2.09%
Baliguda	Hindu	89.40%	9.10%
G. Undayagiri	Hindu	78.47%	19.87%
Daringbadi	Hindu	65.15%	34.31%

Table 3:3, Towns in Kandhamal District (Towns religious Census 2011)

with their sincere hearts. Most of the high places and very large trees are considered to be sacred places. They have the old saying that if they are not faithful to their service considering their offering and sacrifices, they would have to go through tragedies from time to time. Most people believe in goddesses for their healing and

health more than medicine. Often they do sacrifices for the betterment of society, health, cultivation, and family.

The Ethical Status of the District

The ethical standard of the district is considered very high. The people of this district are also very conservative. They do not easily accept the approaches and new implementations which come from the other sects. The people of the state are very strict in their ethical and moral status. They equate their ethical and moral standard with their religious standard. The ethical and religious standard is considered equal. There is no diversity found in ethics and religion even though a large group of people lives there.

Church Status

Though Odisha was the first state in India to pass the anti-conversion bill in 1969, the newspaper “The Hindu” on August 30, 2015, reported that, “Growth rate in Christian population in Odisha has made a quantum jump by 478% in past 50 years compared to 323% and 130% in case of Muslim and Hindu population respectively” (Population of Christians). As per the 2011 census, the share of the Hindu population in Odisha had come down from 94.35% in 2001 to 39.63%. At the same time, both the Muslim and Christian populations grew, from 2.07% to 2.17% and 2.44 to 2.77%, during the last decades. Bishnupada Sethi, Director of Census, reports that the 2001 and 2011 records show that both Gajapati and Kandhamal districts are the leading Christian populated districts in the state (“Population of Christians”). Compared to the rest of Orissa, there are more Christians found in Kandhamal district. It is also true that there are certain places where the gospel is yet to reach. There are no differences among the denominations of Christians in Kandhamal. Though there are two major denominations found, *Roman Catholic* and *Independent/Evangelical* denominations,

they maintain harmony between them. Unlike other districts, there are no differences found between these two denominations and a few other existing minor denominations.

The impact of Christianity among the Kui/Kandhas or Panos is very high. Most of the people who are in the Christian faith are seen as living in high moral and social standards, and they differed from other residents before the riot. However, the situation after the riot in 2008 has been a great challenge for most Christian though a few of them are already restored to some extent.

Participants

The issue addressed in this research is a general one that affected the Church, no matter which denomination. The victims hailed from all class groups from infants to the old, and everyone had to experience the struggle, though it might have varied from person to person. Hence there will be three major sources of participants in this research including leaders of the church and layman/believers. Along with those two major groups, newspapers and magazine articles are included.

Criteria for Selection

The riot in 2008 at Kandhamal was an unrepairable moment for the church. Though it has been over twelve years since then, there are some places still at risk. The demolished churches are yet to be restored. The demolished houses are yet to recover due to poverty and no support from the government or NGOs. There are some people not back to their homes due to the options placed before them, and were given an option to return to their respective homes. In a given situation the Christian believers have to renounce their faith in Christ and rejoin with Hindu faith with prescribed ritual performances. Having considered all these issues, the selection of the candidates for the interviews was focused mostly on those who had experienced those

issues personally either directly or indirectly. Since the causes of the persecution have been hidden, the understanding and presentation of journalists and others came from newspapers. The researcher also planned to interview some legal experts.

Description of Participants

The participants were the local Christian leaders and the believers or lay leaders. Each of those two major groups were the victims of the riot and experienced it individually or corporately. The first group consists of the church leaders which included pastors, evangelists, office bearers of the church, and the organization leaders. The second group of people are believers or lay leaders of the church. The selection of the second group is more carefully taken into consideration. These people are also the ones who have been experiencing those threats for days, months, and even until now. Among the participants, most of the participants lost their properties, their worship centers, or their loved ones who were martyred for the Lord. The researcher also planned to interview a few participants who once were with RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) and now have been persecuted due to their faith in the Lord Jesus. Finally, the researcher included journalists or legal experts, who were witnessing and addressing the incident on a day-to-day basis.

The participants were not distinguished based on any gender, caste, class, or denomination since all of them have experienced the persecution equally for the same reason. Though there is no age limit, the researcher would prefer to include only those who have experienced the persecution, and certainly, the participants may not be less than 30 years old. The only criteria considered for all of the participants are their physical presence during the persecution and their conviction to follow their faith even after bearing a great loss.

Ethical Considerations

All the participants will be from the district Kandhamal. They consist of various denominations, such as Evangelicals, Baptists, Pentecostals, Roman Catholics, Church of North India, and others. The reason for making an inclusive selection is that all of them had an equal share of the struggle for their faith in Christ, no matter to which denomination they belong. All of those denominations are representatives under the umbrella of the church in general. All of them will be participating voluntarily without being compelled to participate, and if there is any inconvenience, they are free to withdraw. Each participant was given a consent letter which is included in the Appendix for further reference. The participants were assured that all data collected will be kept confidential and will not be used for any purpose except for this project. Because of the sensitivity of the subject matter, the interviews will be in a closed room to build the morale of the participants. There will be video and audio recordings of interviews, which will be kept password protected.

Instrumentation

Tim Sensing recommends the combination method of the instrument. The entire interview collected will be placed in tabulation and will be analyzed systematically according to the order of the questions set. Each qualitative question will be given importance and considered with seriousness, and a few of the shared responses will be presented as they are without making further changes with the prior permission of participants. Since the issue dealt with in this study is serious and sensitive even after twelve years have passed, personal interviews and information from published and unpublished articles could be more appropriate.

All those questions underlined are designed by the researcher since the researcher himself is one of the victims of the riot in 2008 at Kandhamal. He has lost

his entire property that was burnt to nothing, and one of his cousins was burnt alive. Having experienced the loss of property and dear ones, the researcher could be able to relate with the proposed questions for the study.

Reliability and Validity of Project Design

The subject is a sensitive and vulnerable subject. Though twelve years have passed since the persecution, there are a few places that still feel the fear and threats even now. Some churches are demolished and were never restored. Some families returned to their old faith due to fear and never returned to the church again. Having considered all these aspects, the researcher will be taking interviews with absolute sincerity. The researcher will also make sure that the researcher and the participant alone will be present during the time of the interview to build trust and confidentiality with the participant.

The researcher will follow certain protocols including:

1. The meeting will be conducted with the approval of the candidate with a voluntary agreement.
2. The interviewer will choose a place with no disruptions.
3. The interviewer will consider one-on-one interviews.
4. Each question will be placed legibly before the participant.
5. The question will also be translated into local dialect which will provide clarity to each participant.

Data Collection

Having completed IRB application approval, the researcher scheduled the process of research as it is proposed. The researcher visited each of the participants with their prior appointment according to their convenient time and date. Since the interviews are very personal and in an individual capacity, there was not a specific

period set unless the participant preferred to do so. Consent will be received from each of the participants to video or audio record the entire interview.

Data Analysis

The researcher used the combined method that includes qualitative and quantitative methods. This data collection also used the pre-intervention type of research. Each interview was completed in one seating, and each interview took 45 – 60 minutes. After having collected data, the analysis of the data included diagramming and tables. Along with the diagramming, there are a few narratives and dialogue analyses presented to provide each of the stories the researcher collected from the participants, especially from the believers.

Review of the Chapter

This chapter highlighted the value and the purpose of the research by explaining the three research questions are raised. It explained the participants and the criteria of selecting participants and why they should be a part of this research. This chapter also highlighted a brief background of the Kandhamal district and the lifestyle of its residents. The chapter also described the procedure and method that applied for the data collection. It also explained the IRB approval and the reliability and validity of the project design. Finally, this chapter explained the process used for the data collection and analysis.

CHAPTER 4

EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the existing issues and challenges for Christians and Christian leaders during and after the riot in Kandhamal to provide them a possible recommendation for the restoration of the church. This chapter presents the findings of qualitative and quantitative data collected from 28 leaders and 29 believers, primarily the victims of the riot in 2008. These leaders include pastors, evangelists, organization leaders, office-bearers of the church, and lay leaders. The leadership consists mainly of men though there was no restriction about including woman leaders for the findings. The believers interviewed included men and women, young and old. All the participants hail from Kandhamal, and each one of them has experienced the violence in person as direct victims of the riot. The researcher spent over three months collecting the information from the participants. The researcher began with oral communication with each participant. Second, the researcher asked for their consent to participate. Third, having received their consent, the researcher visited the participants at the date and time fixed with each individual. The researcher also made sure that the participants had privacy as they shared their opinions with the researcher. To collect the data, the researcher visited the participants at their locations and interviewed them in person. This chapter analyzes the collected information to determine and answer the research questions raised by the researcher.

Participants

The researcher reached out to over 60 people, but only 30 leaders and 30 believers responded. Though the researcher has prepared closed-ended questions, he also left one open-ended question for each questionnaire where the participant could

express something perhaps crucial to know that would provide more information and clarify the subject. Both the leaders and the believers who participated largely came as victims of the riot. Since the incident occurred in 2008, the researcher included participants who were at least 30 years old. All the participants came from Christian families, and the average age is 54 years old.



Figure 4:1, Interview Session

The leaders who participated in the research include the pastors, evangelists, missionaries, Christian NGO workers, lay leaders, and church office bearers and were from different denominations including Roman Catholic lay leaders.

Though the participants were front-line leaders of the church, among 28 leaders only three people have undergone formal theological training. Some of the rest held secular degrees and serve the church based on their

experience. A few of them have just a basic education. The leaders also represent the dominant caste from Kandhamal such as the Scheduled Caste who are known as SC and only a few of them are from the Scheduled Tribe known as ST. Among these 28 leaders, only a few pastors serve the Lord under some denomination, and a large number serve the Lord independently having no connection with any of the so-called mainline or government registered denominations. At the same time the leaders who



Figure 4:2, Research Participants

participated render voluntary service to the church as a leader or pastor. Though the researcher wished to reach out to many more leaders, due to the pandemic he restricted his research to only 28 Christian leaders.

Similarly, 29 Christian believers were interviewed. Among them, over 90% have lost their property in entirety;

some were beaten up, and at least three participants who participated have lost their dear ones who were martyred during the riot. Though the researcher prepared questionnaires in quantitative format, the researcher also had a qualitative question to listen to the believers in person.

Having made an appointment, the researcher visited the victim believers and listened to the participants in person. He recorded all the information shared on a mobile device with their permission.

For the interviews done in Kandhamal district, the researcher covered over 1000 miles to reach all the participants in their preferred locations. The interview time differed from person to person and the gravity of each individual defined the time to be spent. Some participants have not been educated and had to be talked with in their local dialect called Kandha (Kui) language. The researcher hails from Kandhamal, and it was an advantage for him to communicate with such candidates and listen to their sincere and honest experience of the riot. Most of the victims are either from the

Designation and Responsibilities in the Church out of 28 participant leaders

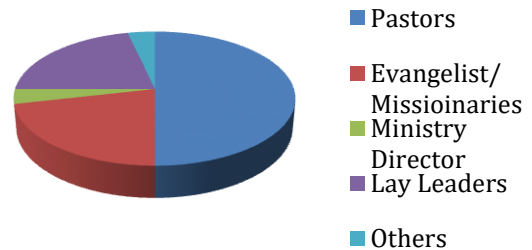


Figure 4:3, Office bearers

General Profession out of 29 believers

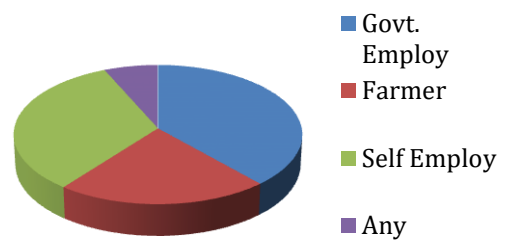


Figure 4:4, Believers General profession

labor class or fall under Below Poverty Line (BPL). Table 4: 1 shows there were at least 4 different categories of participants with regards to their experience of riot. Among them, 26 have lost everything from their property, and 15 people lost their houses.

Category of Participants and Genders		
Category of participants	No of Participants	Percentage
Lost Property (Everything)	26	89.6%
Lost Home (Partial)	15	51.7%
Lost Dear Ones (Martyred)	3	10 %
Never Returned home (People who left the village after the riot)	5	17%
Male	19	65.5%
Female	10	34.4%

Table 4: 1 (Category of Participants and Genders)

Status of Christian Leaders by Denomination		
Church Denomination	Number of participants	Percentage
Main Line (CNI, Methodist)	14	50%
Independent Churches (Affiliated with no other organizations)	11	39%
Roman Catholic	1	3.5%
Evangelical	2	7%

Table 4:2 (Status of Christian Leaders by Denomination)

This table 4:2 presents the leaders by their respected denomination. Out of 28 participants, 14 leaders come from mainline churches. Another 11 leaders came from independent churches who are not affiliated with any of the churches or organizations.

At least two comes from evangelical backgrounds partially affiliated with some other recognized organizations.

Among the 28 leaders interviewed only 3 leaders have undergone more than three years of formal theological education. Besides them, a few have done their theological studies for less than a year and in an informal form. A large number have never been through any theological education.

Research Questions

The researcher has carefully designed his research questions to assess the problem he has proposed. Each of these questions is interlinked with each other and intends to find the core issues to recommend the necessary steps required to be taken for the restoration of the Church.

Research Question #1: Description of Evidence

How do the media and other local sources describe the impact of the 2008 riot on society in general and the Christian church specifically in the district of Kandhamal?

Thomas Carlyle said, “Social Media is the fourth pillar of Democracy.” (Agrawal, “Media”). Agrawal also further describes that “the merit of the democratic system is that it gives freedom of expression and space is given to each individual” (Agrawal). Demographically, the district Kandhamal is underdeveloped, and the Christians are a small minority dominated by Hindus. In such a context there is a large possibility of manipulation in the message and bias against the small minority. There is also not a single media that could present the facts since the media has been managed by leaders of other faiths.

The district Kandhamal mainly hails two castes of people, Scheduled Tribe (ST) and Scheduled Caste (SC). The Scheduled Tribe claims to be the owners of the

land and considers Scheduled Caste as the intruder. The STs are known for their animistic beliefs; however, their identity has been changed, and they now identify with the Hindu religion though they are not Hindu. However, SC is neither animist nor is there any evidence of their roots of origin, but they are known as children of the soil. These two tribes have been living together for a long period as a single community.

After Christianity arrived in Kandhamal, most of the SCs converted to the Christian faith, and a small number of STs accepted the Lord Jesus. As a disadvantage for STs, they received no access to education, and a large number left without any education. In contrast, a large number of the SC community accepted the Lord, accepted the changes introduced, and were privileged with education. This changed the social status of the SC community, and they felt superior to the ST community. Pranay Pandey writes in the article entitled, "Education and Social Change: An Interrelationship,"

Education provides knowledge, training, and skills as well as inculcates new thoughts and attitudes among the young. Many of the old superstitious beliefs and absolute values which prevent progress, through Education can be changed in the favour of enlightened ideas. Backwardness and Poverty of the masses are mainly due to illiteracy and ignorance. Hence, education can be the instrument of rescuing them from their plight (Pranay, "Education and Social Change").

The gradual growth and intrusion of Hindu fanatics could easily manipulate the simple and honest ST community causing animosity between Local Tribal now so-called Hindus and the Christian community. Unfortunately, the phrase was coined, "Christianity is a foreign religion," which has been accepted among the Hindu

community and presents Christians as foreigners. As a result, the tribal Hindus looked at their Christian neighbors as foreigners who has intruded on their land and property and left them in poverty. This has caused a provocation, especially to the Hindu community. Though there has been confusion between these two groups, it had never escalated so high causing large damage to the SC community, especially to the SC or ST Christian believers.

The 2008 riot was caused by the misinterpretation of the situation that occurred after the assassination of the Hindu Priest Laxamananda Saraswati. Though the reports were clear, and there was a statement issued by Naxalites (extremists) taking responsibility for the killing of the self-claimed god-man, it was neither published as it should have been nor accepted. Instead, the message was manipulated by local media creating confusion among the community throwing the blame on local Christians and blaming them for his death.

After Laxamananda's death, the news was spread rapidly across the district Kandhamal. Having reported to the police about the sensitivity of the situation, the district police had to impose the provision found in the Indian Penal Code known as IPC section 144 that prohibits public gatherings. According to IPC section 144, it is imposed in urgent cases of nuisance or danger that have the potential to cause trouble or damage to human life or property (Business Standard, 2021). However, the violence against this imposition was evident. Having considered the gravity of the case, the district authority did not given any permission for the procession of the dead body to take place. However, having violated the government order, the procession took place across the district Kandhamal though there was an imposition of section 144. There were some slogans uttered that were most provoking to the innocent mass of the district. The procession was so strategic that as the procession went on there

was violence that followed. Many of the people witnessed a terrifying picture of mob attacks destroying Christian houses and properties and, in some cases, killing people. Despite these atrocities, the role of media has been biased, and it played a provoking role among the local Hindu community.

The researcher has interviewed many eyewitnesses who experienced the situation moment by moment. The experience shared by each individual is their personal experience. The researcher interviewed 28 leaders from Kandhamal, and Table 4:3 displays the responses of the leaders. These 28 leaders were asked at least 21 questions both quantitative and qualitative.

Questions for the Leaders				
1. What is the comparative status of the local Christians (Social/ Educational/ Economical), in comparison with other dwellers in your town/ village?				
Much Better	Better	Same as others	Worse than Others	Much worse than others
15	4	4	4	1
2. What is the opinion of the locals about Christians in District Kandhamal?				
Very Good	Good	Fair	Bad	Very Bad
3	13	4	6	1
3. Were you present at Kandhamal during the time of the riot against the Christians in 2008?				
a. Yes = 27				
b. No = 1				
4. Were you a victim of the 2008 riot?				
a. Yes = 26				
b. No = 0				
c. Partially = 2				
5. Where were you after the riot and how long?				
Refugee camp	Remained in the village	Out of the District		
15 (10 days in Jungle)	5 (Hiding in the jungle)	9 (over one year)		
6. How many families or members of your church were affected by the riot?				
Whole Church	Selective members of the church	Partially	No	
23	4	2		

7. Mention any one reason for persecution/ riot against Christians in 2008 according to you?

- a. Social reason = 4
- b. Political reason = 5
- c. Economical reason
- d. Religious reason = 24
- e. Not sure = 1

8. Was the role of the media during the time of riot satisfactory?

The media played a good role	Media played no role	The media played a bad role	Others	NA
1	11	15		2

9. What was the role of media aftermath in special reference to the Christian community?

The media played a good role	Media played no role	The media played a bad role	Others	NA
1	7	21		2

10. Do you think any new members added to your church after the riot since 2008?

Less than 5	More than 5	Same members as before	Reduced compared to before	None	NA
5	14 families	5	2	2	1

11. If there is an increase in membership in your church, where are the new members come from?

New Converts	Other Church believers	Migrants	Cannot say	NA
17	5			6

12. Have you done any survey of membership added to your church after the 2008 riot?

Yes periodically	No Never	Partially if required	NA
16	2	6	2

13. Is there any record in the church or organization regarding the believers' number either added or reduced since 2008?

Not a regular record	Yes	No	Can't say
5	20	1	1

14. What are the major changes you have seen among Christians for the past 12 years after the 2008 riot?

- a. Method of worship pattern = 5
- b. Believers are fearful = 13
- c. Just Sunday service happening and no other church activities = 3

d. Any other (Specific)

15. Are you satisfied as a leader to see the contribution of local leadership for the Church to keep the church intact after the riot?

Yes	No	Partially
18	8	2

16. How many believers returned to your church after persecution in 2008?

Number of believers before the 2008 riot	Returned (%)	Did not return (%)	Reason for not returning if any
	100% and 18 Partially	3 families	No resources to survive

17. Is the Church playing any role for the church to function normally?

The role of the Church commendable	The role of the church not impressive	The role of the Church could have better	If any
13	6	7	1

18. How often Christians get together/ fellowships have been organized during the past 12 years?

Less than five	More than five	Frequently	Never
1	12	14	

19. How many sessions Church/ Organization conducted to restore the confidence of the believers after the 2008 riot?

Once in a Year	No specific period	Frequently now and then	Never
1	8	18	1

20. What is the response of the believers after persecution now?

Normal	Still fearful	Partly Normal	Can't say
11	11	8	

21. Would you share your experience in brief?

Table 4: 3, Question for the Leaders

Out of 21 questions asked the leaders, there were at least 10 questions directly or indirectly connected to the role of the media. Though question 1-7 have a general nature and are not directly connected to media, they are the key points which media

were able to manipulate and distort the facts. Questions 8, 9, and 21 highlight information about the role of the media during the riot.

Social Structure

Overall in the district, the status of the community is sharply divided between two major groups called Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste. There are social, educational, and economic difference, and individual Christian lives are far superior to the Hindus' way of live in

Kandhamal district. Over half of the responses agree and stated that their way of living is far better than the rest of the community life around them. Though there were some cases where the status of the Christians is not better or is unexpectedly low, they are rare in nature.

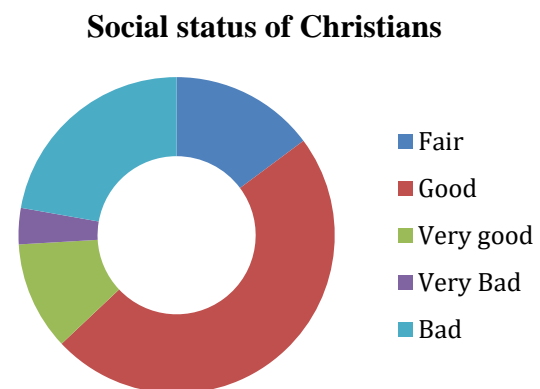


Figure 4: 5

Having experienced Christians in Kandhamal, a large number of participants stated that others' general opinion of Christians is good and very good. No doubt there is caste discrimination in the district among Christians and Hindus. Socially Christians have been considered outcasts because of the nature of their faith and the practices they do. The Hindu leaders also present Christianity as a foreign religion, and that makes Christianity an outcaste religion. It may be the food habits that Christians practice, such as consumption of beef and pork, which are considered as degraded food according to the culture and the context of the vegetarian Hindu faith. This causes Christianity to be hated and not admired by the STs though they wish to come to the Christian faith.

The causes of the riot have been mentioned, but the key reasons are that Christianity has been presented as a foreign religion and Christians as extortionists. Having seen the social, educational, and economic status of Christians, it is also suggested that Christians have exploited local Hindus and became affluent in the community. The media has been always prompt in presenting Christianity as a foreign religion and all Christians as exploiters.

The Riot Experience

The riot began after there was a message flashed in the local media. According to questions 8 and 9, a large number of people said that the role of media was bad during the riot. Question number 21 reflects the opinion that, though there was Indian Penal Code 144 and according to its provision it allowed no gathering, the media went on to provoke the Hindu community by highlighting the procession that took place across the district. Though there was no confirmed report about the culprits who assassinated Swamy Laxamanananda, and the media accused the Christians of his killing. The message was provocative to the Hindu community. As a result, there was a loss of property and life in the Christian community. During this riot, 27 out of 28 participants were present in the district Kandhamal. Among these 27, 26 were direct victims and had property damaged or dear ones attacked or killed. The riot not only caused damage to property and loss of life, but Christians had to flee from their homes and villages and be sheltered in the mountains and hilltops for several days. Each person interviewed testified that the hills and mountains became their immediate shelters. Some of them also mentioned that they lived in the mountains for a week after which they were sent to refugee camps built by the state government. Some who were able to flee from the district were not able to come back home for years. Some families had to live in the neighboring towns for over five years due to the continual

threats and conditions placed by local Hindu communities. Though this riot targeted the leaders of the church and tried to eliminate them from the community, the impact affected the whole church at Kandhamal. Out of 28 participants, 23 leaders reported that their churches were destroyed along with the property of the church and their own property.

Religion and Societal Threat

For the Christians, it was clear that there was a political agenda behind the riot, but the religious agenda was also evident. The political parties, especially Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), used religion as the means to achieve political mileage. The agenda of BJP is clear; it wants to see India as a Hindu nation and the same in Kandhamal district where only Hindus should be dwelling and no Christians should be given a place to shelter. The rioters shouting the slogans such as “Jai Sri Ram, Jai Bir Hanuman, Bajrang Balli ki Jai...” were the pieces of evidence. Not only those slogans were heard, but they were heard shouting, “No Christian should remain in this land.” There also were anti-Christian slogans uttered to provoke the local innocent Hindus, causing their religious sentiment to hurt and to react against their Christian neighbors. Some of the leaders also mentioned that the reason for the riot was due to social conflict and political conflict, but out of 28 leaders 24 of them have mentioned that the reason for the riot was religiously motivated. The leaders also said that, since there has been a rapid growth of Christianity and Kandhamal stands as the second largest Christian-populated district in Odisha, the growth has to be stopped through such riots by instigating and using local Hindu fanatics. The political parties have observed that conversion to Christianity not only changed one's faith but one's lifestyle. The change of faith resulted in the transformation of life: a change in educational status, social life, and moral standard. People who believed in sorceries

and sacrifices to idols (including human sacrifice) do not practice those now. People who thought they should not be attending schools or colleges prefer to attend now. People who practiced social evils, such as drinking, smoking, or lawlessness, were transformed. They started questioning such practices and demanded their basic rights. Religion was used as a means to bring conflict within a peaceful community and keep the ST Hindus under the control of so-called High Caste Hindus.

Media Manipulation

Anto Akkara writes,

The hyperactive and vigilant national media too cannot be absolved of its inaction is leading to the massive whitewashing of the Kandhamal conflagration. The stories of brutal murders, police inaction and continued terrorizing of the Christian minority could have been spicy headlines for the media. After the initial rush, the national media did not pay much attention to the gross human rights violation with the connivance of the state machinery due to the remoteness of Kandhamal jungles – that required a minimum of six hours of arduous road travel from Bhubaneswar. (Akkara, Kandhamal Craves 168)

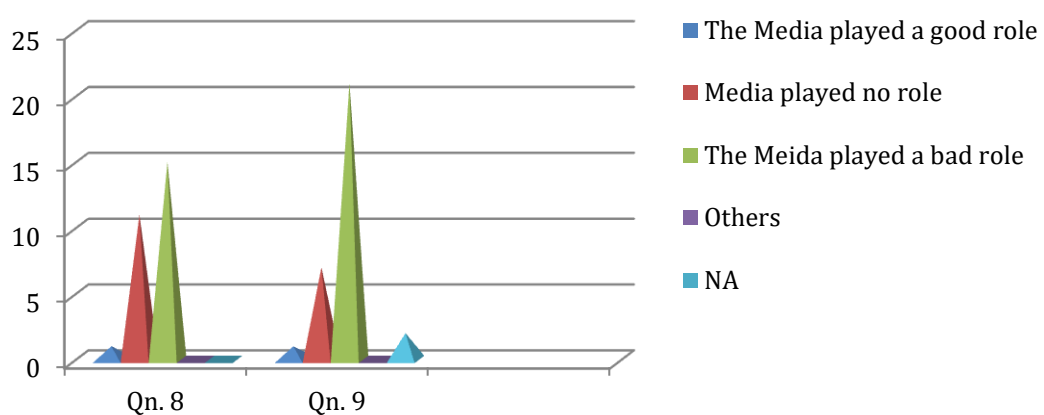


Figure 4: 6 Media Participation

Qn. 8. Was the role of the media during the time of riot satisfactory?

Qn. 9. What was the role of media aftermath in special reference to the Christian community?

Question number 8, 9, and 21 were asked specifically to know the role of the media during the time of riot. Out of 28 participants, 11 of them have not seen the neutral role that was expected, and 15 of them strongly condemn the role of media. Though the role of media is expected to be fair and honest to help the nation and community grow positively, the role of media was unfair in presenting the truth and created a rift in the peaceful community. Not only during the time of the riot but after the persecution the media kept being provocative. At least 21 participants out of 28 acknowledged and described the role of media as a “bad role.” It simply means the media was unfair in presenting the truth and presented news that was not true.

Research Question #2: Description of Evidence

How do church leaders and laypeople describe the impact of the 2008 riot on the Christian church in the district of Kandhamal?

Though most Christians are educated in society, their minority status keeps them helpless to demand their rights to live with dignity. Most STs, are not educated. They consider education only for the privileged. Besides their poverty, the ST structure of lifestyle does not permit them to explore new avenues in advanced living. Above all, the High Caste Hindus and Hindu fanatics play a vital role in the individual lives of the local ST Hindus. For instance, two young men from the researcher’s village hailed from Hindu backgrounds and were strong students. Having done well in high school, they started college. Both of them were offered to join with SAKHA (RSS Wing). One decided to join SAKHA as a full-time member, and the other decided not to join and pursue his studies. Gradually the youth who joined SAKHA could not continue his studies, but the other person continued his studies and became

an educated person in the society. In the later part, having heard the Gospel, he has received the Lord Jesus Christ and committed his life to serving the Lord as a pastor witnessing his conviction in the Lord Jesus. The social lifestyle between these two is very evident in the quality of life they live now. One dropped out, and the other lives a respectable life in society. The overall lifestyle of Christians is better than the rest of the Hindu community in the district.

Though the riot had a negative impact on the Christian community it could not completely stop the growth of the church. There were churches demolished; the properties were turned into ashes; lives were sacrificed, and churches were left closed for months or years. However, the Christians continue to increase. Questions number 10-21 directly shows the voices of leaders and their witness about the impact of the riot on the Christian Church in Kandhamal.

Kandhamal district is the second-largest Christian-populated district in Odisha. The growth rate of Christianity is higher there than in any other district, even though the state of Odisha imposed the anti-conversion bill in the year 1969.

Christians in the district are not held back despite several oppositions. The 2008



Figure 4:7, The church was destroyed and restored again with a new structure.

persecution is one of the most uncivilized acts and is compared to Neronian persecution during Roman history. Even it could not stop the church's growth in number. The restoration of the damages is gradual and has influenced the Christian

faith to grow steadily (Figure 4: 7). There are at least 14 leaders who participated in this research that acknowledged more than five new families have been added to their churches. On the other hand, there are few churches yet to revive completely, and there is no growth in the number of churches. Though the numbers are not great, there is a positive sign of growth in the church.

It is also encouraging that some of those converted had engaged in the rioting. One of the rioters gave his testimony after his conversion to Christianity as he was asked what made him Christian. In his reply he answered:

I was one of the riot leaders. I participated in rioting actively and I have engaged in destroying houses as well as shaming the Christians wherever I find a chance. During the riot, I along with friends found a young man from our village and paraded him naked for miles putting him in shame. We have decided to kill him but we could not execute him for no reason. However, we left him free and having left the village he shelter in the refugee camp. After several months as he returned to the village and met me on the way wished me asking how am I doing? I kept looking at him without understanding what is in him that he is still paying me to respect instead of a hating look. I kept thinking and his attitude and I was not able to understand. Rather I was convinced of his believes and realized the fact of his calmness. I have decided to become a Christian and now I am a believer in Lord Jesus Christ.

There was a drastic change that occurred in the life of this person after he realized the different lifestyle of his Christian neighbors, and that caused him to receive the Lord and he was converted to Christianity. Having asked question number 11, 17 leaders

participated and acknowledged that there is a growth of 10% in their churches though other 6 participants preferred not to mention the growth of membership in their church.

The churches in district Kandhamal are not organized as much as other city churches do concerning systematic management of the official church documents. Though the churches keep the record of membership, it is not systematically organized. Since most of the churches consist of counted and regular believers, keeping the membership record seems unnecessary. There is no such membership count in village local churches. One of the reasons could be that the community who live in a village mostly belong to a common family root. It is rare that outsiders join the village church unless a person is converted from ST background.

Question number 16 shows that today most of the people have been restored to the villages and the churches, but the churches have not been witnessing any growth or progress in the number of believers added. Although there is a gradual restoration happening, some of the leaders also witness that there are some believers who are yet to return to the churches and even to the villages. It is also told that some of the Christians who left home during the riot have yet to return home. The leaders mentioned that in some places the fear still exists, and in other places although there is no fear, job and work opportunities in the village have been a challenge. Survival becomes a challenge since there is no satisfactory compensation from the Government. At the same time the churches, especially the Roman Catholic churches, are not able to extend their help to the needy in terms of their day-to-day living. Many of the leaders and believers have witnessed that in the post-riot experience where there were difficult times it was the Roman Catholic churches that became a great help to a large number of needy people. Hence except one church there are about 27

leaders who admitted that the complete restoration of the churches is yet to occur in Kandhamal district.

The Experience and Changes of the Church in the Last Twelve Years

The church has experienced the riot as a whole. There are some Christian villages impacted more, and some experienced a partial impact of damage or loss. The riot has affected the church and each



Figure 4:8 Prayer hall restored but services are yet to start normal.

member of the church from children to old, educated to uneducated, SC Christians or ST Christians. The riot has impacted the basic living standard of each Christian individual who lives in Kandhamal. There are few places where believers having no care remained in the village and could survive through fearmongering and threats. In some churches, they had to stay away from the village for months and years. There have been some churches shut down or destroyed. and a few of them are converted to Hindu shrines by installing Hindu idols. Unfortunately, there is no way to get them back to worship centers again though many leaders are trying to return them to normalcy.

Though there are other churches restored they do not function normally as they did in early days. Twelve long years having passed since 2008, three leaders mentioned that there are only church services happening and no other activities are permitted to organize. They function with conditional rules placed by the local Hindu authorities (Hindu Sabha). Among the leaders interviewed, 13 participant leaders state that though life looks normal there has been a fearful atmosphere in the churches and

the Christian community. Though churches or leaders organize some activities besides Sunday service, the deployment of police is asked from the local authority. Having experienced and studied the situation in the district, 15 leaders mentioned that there is a great change in worship patterns now. No outdoor programs can be conducted unless there is police permission or police deployed around the church arena. To use a sound system outside the arena of the church requires permission from the local administration. Christmas used to be celebrated throughout the month with processions, singing, and praising from village to village and street to street. Such celebrations have completely stopped. Not only that there is a period prescribed by the government for such special occasions organized by the church. There used to be regular activities organized by the churches, and leaders of the churches now have no such scope to do so.

17. Is the church leadership playing any role for the church to function normally?

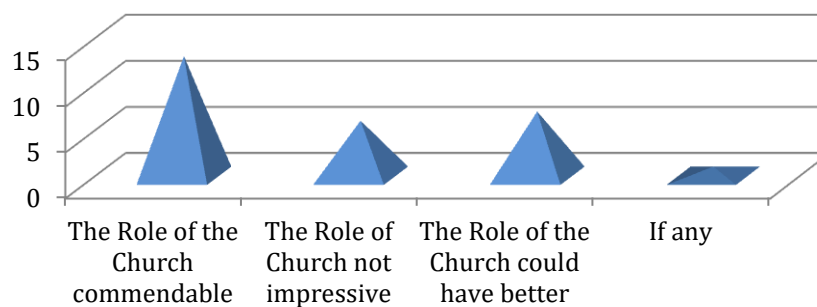


Figure 4:9, The Role of Church Leaders

Having considered question number 17 (Figure 4:9), the role of the church is commendable, 13 participants appreciate the role in a positive way. An equal number disagreed with the leaders' appropriate role for the church to function normally. Perhaps in consideration of the leaders' role, there was a list of names, especially the names of the church leaders that was published by the rioters, and those leaders are targeted. This has created havoc among the leaders and forced them to hide out from

the rioters and from the village itself. The fear of attacks and being targeted kept the Christian leaders away from the villages leaving the believers helpless. Nandagiri refugee home (Figure 4: 10) is one that sheltered Christians who could not return to



Figure 4:10 Nandagiri Refugee Home

their homes out of fear for their lives. For one to six years and even more, the leaders did not return to the village. Few church leaders are yet to return to their villages and especially to their ministry field. Despite the leaders' failure to revive the church, question number 18 provides a shred of evidence that the Christian believers got together and organized smaller fellowships to help the weak and the needy and work

18. How often christians get together/ fellowships have been organized during the past 12 years?

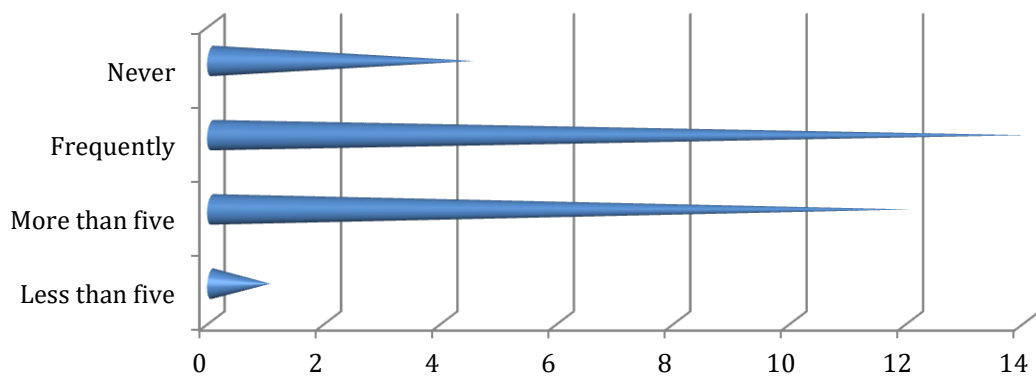


Figure 4:11 Christian Fellowship in Last 12 Years

toward restoration. According to the response in question number 18 (Figure 4: 11), a large number of leaders asserted that most of the churches initiated get-togethers and carefully organized fellowships among the believers, though not in public.

The absence of leaders made the church helpless yet a large number of churches organized fellowships and workshops to reassure and rebuild the confidence of the believers after the 2008 riot. Question number 19 (Figure 4:12) shows that though fellowships were not organized as often as they used to be in the past, the small-scale fellowships had brought confidence to the lives of the believers.

19. How many sessions church/ organization conducted to restore the confidence of the believers after the 2008 riot?

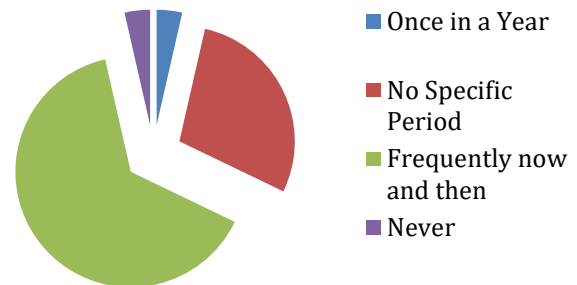


Figure 4: 12, The initiative of the Church to Restore

Unfortunately, the role of government was passive as they did not permit the Christian community to organize any meetings that could rebuild the hopes of the dispersed and persecuted Christians. Some of the leaders confessed that since there was a certain

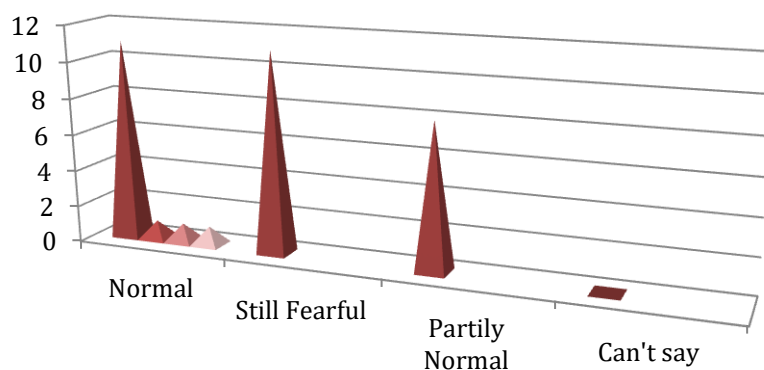


Figure 4: 13, Believers Response

bond agreement with the local village leaders, the fellowships and gatherings were not possible to organize for a couple of years. At the same time, any such gathering required prior permission from local government authority and had to seek their approval to organize.

Though it has been over 12 years, the response of the believers to the question number 20, “what is the response of the believers after persecution now?”, is a concern for the church now. Out of 28 responses, only 11 of the respondents considered the situation normal; 11 participants expressed that the situation was still fearful, and 8 participants are skeptical about the normalcy of the situation (Figure 4:13). A large number of participants unanimously agreed in saying they have lost their trust in their neighbors. Their neighbors are unpredictable, and considering the situation normal may not be right though the situation looks normal. The believers and leaders are fearful still, and there have been frequent threats from the Hindu neighbors.

Personal Experiences

Some of the personal experiences of the leaders follow. Though the interviewer got permission from the participants to publish their names, keeping the sensitivity in mind, the researcher has used other alternative names in a symbolic form.

1. A participant who serves as a pastor in one of the churches in Kandhamal testifies about his conversion and how his life has been entirely changed after receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. He shares the testimony that brought him in the Lord and his miraculous experience of escape in the time of riot expresses his faith in the Lord:

I was a RSS leader and I had over 300 followers. I was religious and had my special god to worship. One of the days, my daughter fall sick and I called a sorcerer who could heal my daughter. However having performed all rituals he told me that, I am the cause of my daughter’s death. The next day out of frustration I got toxic with wine and though out of my mind I kept pronouncing the name of Jesus. I felt to leave

every ritual or religious activity I was practicing and to follow Jesus who perhaps could not harm my daughter but to heal her. With the strong decision, I destroyed the alter I had at home for the goddesses and invited my neighbor Christian brother to pray for me. Having seen me, my family, and a few of my relatives started following the Lord. In a few days over 13 families followed Christ. Now I serve as a pastor leaving all those habits I used to practice and known for my notorious character.

During the riot, I along with my family were in the mountain for 13 days. The rioters kept searching for me but God protected us from evil hands. After 13 days we went to the camp center and where we stayed for several months. A few months later, Government officials dropped us in the village. After we returned to our village we were restricted with water resources earlier used commonly, we were restricted from all-natural resources which we had right to use and even we were warned not to walk on the village roads. However, God has been kind and by now things are better. I kept encouraging my believers as a shepherd giving them hope to live a life of faith. Gradually the church is revived and believers are participating in the church actively.

2. Pastor B shares his experience during the riot where he was an eyewitness:

I am an eyewitness of every moment of the riot that broke in my village. Having seen the terrifying situation, all the believers came to the church for shelter. Believers in the village decided to petrol throughout the night and remain vigilant in monitoring every movement of rioters. Though there were few attempts to attack the

village they kept failing in their attempts. After over 40 days they could finally enroot to the village with several hundred in number at 4 am. They had every type of instrument and they also were firing with their guns. Out of fear people in the village run into the jungles and the attacker continued to ransack until the daybreak. Believers had to hide out from the wrath of rioters and many escaped to the relief camps to a nearby town. A few months later believers returned to the village and we kept organizing several rounds of fellowships encouraging believers to revive. Though there was an adversary atmosphere people seem convinced with their faith and actively participated in church activities.

3. Pastor C testifies:

It was Sunday at 11 am we got our service over. At 1 pm the rioters attacked our houses and destroyed our church. Having seen that terrifying situation, our Christian community escaped to a nearby mountain to save our lives. However, after two days our village Hindu brothers following us to the mountains took us back to the village. Though they took us to our village, we had to sift to the refugee camps built by the Government because there was nothing left for us in the village except a handful of ashes. Every property of ours was burnt to ashes. We were given shelter in the tent for almost 8 months where we were provided all basic needs. We also have received a few material help from Christian organizations as we returned to the village. Though facing such an adversary situation and losing all our property caused us

large damage, most of the believers returned to the church except one family who aspired to their selfish gain.

Research Question #3: Description of Evidence

What strategies could be implemented to help Christian church leaders bring about the restoration of the Christian church and draw in dispersed believers?

This question seeks strategies to help the Christian church leaders and their role in the Christian community be restored after the riot in 2008. The researcher has specifically considered the believers’ opinions under the proposed research question. At least thirteen questions were asked to the believers to seek the answer for the question posed.

Questions asked to the believers with 29 participants		
1. How long have you been Christian?		
From the past generations	First-generation	Last few years
24	5	X
2. Did you lose anything (property/ lives) during the riot in 2008?		
a. Yes (specify) = 26		
b. No = 1		
c. Partially (specify) = 2		
3. Did anyone help you in shelter and food during rehabilitation after riot?		
a. Government = 21		
b. Churches in the neighborhood = 0		
c. NGOs = 9		
d. None = 7		
4. Did anyone help you with your resettlement back at home from your loose after the 2008 riot?		
a. Government = 22		
b. Churches in the neighborhood = 1		
c. NGOs = 18		
d. None =		
5. What makes you remain in the Christian faith even after witnessing such a riot?		
a. Because of our conviction = 29		

b. Because we have been receiving some material help = 0			
c. Because of our background (forefathers) = 1			
6. Are you still attending the church after you returned home even after the riot?			
a. Regularly = 28			
b. Occasionally = 1			
c. No = 0			
7. What do you think about the effectiveness of the role of Church leaders after the riot?			
Satisfactory	Not Satisfactory	Partially satisfactory	Cannot say
14	X	14	1
8. Are you free to worship in the Church?			
Yes	No	Some times	With Conditions
27	1	X	1
9. Are there any of your members of the church yet to back to the Church?			
Yes	No	How many	
5	24	X	
10. Is there any of your church members/ relatives reconverted to the Hindu faith?			
Yes	No	No Comments	
3 families	24	Wife divorced her husband after he was converted to Hinduism	
11. What is the present circumstance of your church regarding the freedom of your faith?			
Good	Still doubtful	Not good	Cannot say
25	4	X	X
12. What is the response from your fellow Hindu neighborhood?			
Cordial	Still doubtful	Not good	Cannot say
2	24	2	1
13. Share your personal experience with Christ before and after persecution?			

Table 4:4, Question for the Believers

All the participant believers are from Kandhamal and experienced the riot in 2008 directly or indirectly. Out of 29 participants, 26 have experienced a great loss; two participants experienced a partial loss, and only one was not directly affected by the riot in 2008. Interestingly, out of 29 participants, only 5 participants were first-

generation Christians, and the remaining were more than one generation Christians. Each one of them lost property including their houses, wealth, and lives of their dear ones. At least three lost their dear ones. Question number 13 provides these details. The riot experience was a nightmare experience, and it caused homelessness for a large number of Christians. There was a government initiative to extend the help for the victims, yet it was not sufficient to cover their loss. The help came largely from the government, and 21 believers acknowledged the little help they received toward compensation. Though NGOs were restricted in their involvement, nine participants acknowledged a little help from NGOs. Unfortunately, there were at least seven participants who have not received any help from any of the sources and had to survive on their own. Although the cause of the riot was religious conflicts and land ownership conflict, some acknowledged the goodness of their Hindu neighbors.

Perhaps their neighbors became gave them shelter and were compassionate in their troubled times. The researcher himself had the experience of getting support from a Hindu neighbor who was a Hindu community president.

The riot had a deep impact on the Christian believers, and they reconsidered their faith in the Lord. However, the conviction of

all 29 participants in the Lord stood as a foundation and strong pillar even when the riot was most severe. To question number five, “What makes you remain in the Christian faith even after witnessing such a riot?”, all the believers made an equivocal

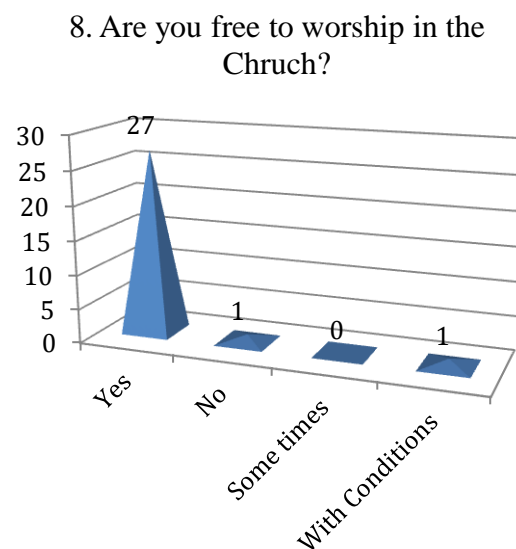


Figure 4: 14, Worship in the Church

statement such as it is their conviction that keeps them remain in the Christian faith amid such riot.

As mentioned earlier, the riot has caused great damage to the church. As a result, a large number of church buildings have been destroyed; some were converted to community halls, and some had idols installed within. Not only were the properties damaged, but the pastors, Christian workers, and some of the believers were also martyred for their faith. In certain places even now churches are yet to be restored. Yet their conviction and faith in the Lord is the most significant asset that they still possess. Having returned to their respective villages some were not allowed to live in their villages and were ostracized. Some had no choice but to compromise and remain in the village following conditions prescribed by the village Hindu committees. Despite all those conditions and adversarial situations, out of 29 participants, 28 attended church regularly after they returned home even after the riot. One of the participants admitted to attending the service occasionally due to the fear and threats he experiences now and then from his Hindu neighbors.

The rioters collected the names of Christian leaders and prepared to assassinate them or to make sure they did not remain in their respected villages or in Kandhamal district itself. Leaders from each church witnessed that there were some leaders targeted specifically to be assassinated, and it was a crucial time for each Christian leader to find a safe location. Having received the threats from rioters, most of the leaders had to flee from their residences and hide out in safe places where they could not be reached. In such circumstances, question number seven, “what do you think about the effectiveness of the role of church leaders after the riot?”, brings a mixed answer. Out of 29 participants, 14 participants expressed their opinion of satisfaction over the leaders’ role in the church, and 14 were partially satisfied with

the role of leaders after the riot. As for the believers' opinion, some of the leaders, though they received threats, did not wish to leave their flock, and some others, leaving their believers, settled in safe places.

The district of Kandhamal is known as the second-largest Christian district in the state of Odisha. Though there have been frequent riots there, and poverty with education and unemployment has been a challenge, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is an asset for most of the believers. The results of question number 20 from the leader's questionnaire show that over half of the church leaders expressed their fear and ambiguity about their relationship with their Hindu neighbors. Despite the adversarial situation, the believers did not stop attending worship services regularly. Out of 29 participants, 27 attend church services frequently, and one with the condition given by the village Hindu leaders. In a rare context, one of the participants is not able to attend church services due to fear and threat of life even today.

The return of the people to the own villages brought a strong determination not only to find a route home but to the church as well. The threats have been frequent; social ostracization is common, and yet nothing could stop a large number of the believers from rejoining their church services. While 5 of the participants admitted that some of the members of their church have yet to return to the church, and 24 participants witnessed the return of every member to the church.

The threats are frequent ever since the riot broke in 2008. In most of the places, Christian believers were accepted with prescribed conditions by the village Hindu leaders. In some cases, Christians are not allowed to come back to the village at all. Few of the believers also expressed that there is no cooperation or any cordial relationships left for the Christians to bring them back to their respected village. Besides that, the key concern is the threat against their faith. One of the believers

witnessed that during the riot a Hindu brother expressed his concern for his Christian neighbor saying not to harm him, and the response of the mob was all the more inhuman, and both the Christian and Hindu neighbors were killed on the spot.

Question number 10 seeks an answer from the believers asking whether any of their relatives reconverted or returned to the Hindu faith. Responding to this question a large number of respondents expressed that returning home caused a crucial decision to either face the unfavorable circumstances or turn to the Hindu faith though it may be against their conviction. One of the believers shared that a wife divorced her husband due to his conversion to the Hindu faith. There were a few that had no means to escape and had to agree to the demands of the Hindu leaders at that point and pretended to be converts to Hindu faith. However, they were later returned to the church. Anto Akkara records an incident,

When an armed mob led by bigots landed on 25 August in Gutingia village near Sarangod, all the two dozen Christian families fled to the jungle. The mob shouted at them that unless they became Hindu, they would never allow the Christians back into the village. After starving in the jungle for four days in heavy rain, they trekked several kilometers to reach the relief camp at Udaigiri.

Three weeks later, 30-year-old Runima Digal with her husband Ishwar went to her father's village leaving their four children in the refugee camp. On their way back to the camp, they decided to walk through their village which was close by, to check on the remains of their house before catching the bus.

On hearing that Ishwar had returned to his parent's house with his wife, a dozen bigots were on the lookout for him and were checking the

buses passing through the area on 20 September. Unable to find him, the frustrated group was returning when Ishwar and his wife came in front of them as they were walking towards the road.

“How dare you return here without becoming a Hindu?” they asked and beat up Ishwar mercilessly. “I was thrown away when I rushed forward to protect him. They killed him, cut his body into pieces, and carried it away while I had collapsed unconscious. After some time, I woke up and found nobody around but only the blood marks,” recalled Runima. (Akkara, *Shining Faith* 74-75)

The present situation of the church is mostly good though there have been doubtful movements experienced by the Christians from time to time. Out of 29 participants, 25 agreed about the favorable atmosphere and freedom to exercise their faith. On the other hand, 4 participants expressed doubtfulness about their freedom to exercise their faith.

The community life of Kandhamal district has been always commendable. Though there has been a sharp distinction between SC and ST community in regards to their faith and beliefs, they identify, value, and acknowledge concern for each other. The community life of Kandhamal dwellers had been outstanding. However, the riot had brought a sharp barrier between SC Christians and ST Hindus. Though the Christians are free to express their faith to some extent, their cordial relationship with Christian brothers is largely doubtful. At least two participants expressed that their relationship with their neighborhood is not good at all. It sounds like both sides have learned to compromise and live together though there are no genuine relationships left among them.

The researcher had an open-ended question for the believers and heard about their personal experiences during the riot and for the last twelve years as believers amid adversarial situations. Below are a few of the experiences shared by the believers.

1. Beaten until they thought I am dead: With the permission of the participant the researcher has considered the witness to publish:

It was early morning 4: 30, the rioters attacked our house. They had deadly weapons, and they all were covered with masks. They have attacked me and chopped me on my head, hand, and my leg. Having considered me dead they left throwing me by the roadside. Knowing my situation my friend rushed me to the hospital for my treatment. Having treated I got my senses back and was discharged with Band-Aids. Meanwhile, they have destroyed my house and business completely. Looking at the adversary situation I took my family to shelter in relief camps set by the Government.

I don't regret the pain and struggle I have received and continue to receive. I consider it as a privilege and I experience His kindness in me and to my family. We are never ceased to thank God for His goodness.

2. One of the most overwhelming witnesses was from a new believer who had lost her husband during the riot. She had accepted the Lord in recent years through her husband who was Christian by birth. She says:

It was in the early hour, we were in Kambaguda village and heard saying houses and churches from the nearby village has been burnt and destroyed. As we tried to enquire further about the details, we realized that all these things are happening on the account of the death of a

Hindu priest and the Christians are accountable for his assassination. Hence Christians are targeted by Hindu fanatics. The whole day we were watching all those incidents from a far place. Meanwhile, we also were advised by our Hindu neighbors that, having destroyed the property of neighboring Christians' rioters are planning to kill Christians and especially those Christian leaders. Hence we have decided to flee to the mountains/ forests in the same evening. Though there were heavy rain and thick night, we had no choice but to escape to the forest to save our lives. Before we left the home, we hid two of our children to a faithful and trustworthy Hindu neighbor.

During the time we are fleeing I realized my husband was seen restless. As I asked him about his anxiety and feelings, he expressed a strong restless feeling within and asked me to keep praying for him. Though I kept calling him to shelter underneath the umbrella, he denied it and chooses to wet under the rain.

After a while having realized our house has been burnt, we have decided to return to our respective village. As we reached home, the first thing we wanted to make sure that our children are safe and they were. Finding them safe we went to a Christian house which was the only house left without lit fire. My husband took both kids on both sides and having spread a piece of cloth on the floor laid placing both kids over both sides of him spreading his arms around them.

Early in the morning, my husband had decided to go to his village Bodimunda which was about 20 kilometers from our dwelling place. Despite my denial, he decided to walk through the mountain route

making his path to reach home and see his parents and relatives safe and secure. By then it was also reported that a pastor has been chopped and killed in a neighboring village. Hence knowing about that incident I have tried to stop him not to go out of our hiding place. However, despite my plea, he started walking toward his village Bodimunda. It was not only me but a few restricted for him to travel yet he was not in a position to listen to anyone. Moreover, since he had no food for two days; his preference to walk on the mountain route was not advised. Even as he walked few miles, as a coincident he reached a point where over 500-600 rioters were resting after destroyed the houses nearby villages. By seeing him they shouted saying, here comes another Christian, and they with a great mob-run toward him. Hence seeing that situation and people running toward him, he tried to escape for his life. However, as he entered a paddy field that was clammy and he was struck into that soil. Even as he got struck, they surrounded him began to rain him with stones until they were convinced of his death. They also chopped him with weapons even as they passed him by. The incident took place in the morning and leaving him dead all those rioters went to a nearby village called Totamaha where they have again burnt houses and killed Pastor Akbar and burnt his along with his house at 4 pm.

Having done all those heinous acts, they were not satisfied and returned to paddy field in the evening and dragged the dead body lying near to the church and burnt him saying in sarcasm, “let us burn him and see his resurrected, as his lord Jesus resurrected after three days.”

Meanwhile, they collected all the furniture from the church, and pouring kerosene they burnt him to ashes. Further having burnt him completely they have collected his ashes and threw them in the drainage.

A few hours later the message was passed to Delhi and we got a call from Delhi saying my husband has been killed. Since we were sheltering in the mountain we were not about to know all those unfortunate incidents occurring to our family, especially with my husband. Though the message had reached our pastor earlier, he was reluctant to inform me of the unfortunate happening to my husband. However by the evening same day, I was told about my husband's death by one of the elderly women, knowing and hearing that unfortunate message though I found myself hopeless, I had to stay in the mountain with two of my little ones. The whole night we spent in the mountain and returned home the next day morning. On our return in the morning, we were informed by the well-wishers about the aggressive mob and who had been hunting Christians to kill them. Knowing that we returned to the jungle for our safety once again. In the next two days, we visited the place where my husband was killed and burnt but found nothing except a piece of bone. After which we filed a case and we were sifter to a relief camp.

Though that was one of the most painful experiences in my life, I remain thankful to God for his protection and provision for us to date. God is faithful to us and we are grateful to God for his provision till now.

3. The testimony of Mr. J:

I have received the Lord as my savior in 2005. Before that, I was sick and was bedridden for over 10 years and no Doctor could diagnose my sickness. As I met two evangelists and having received their prayer for me there was a gradual change and healing occurred. Realizing the truthfulness of the power of Lord Jesus I discarded all other goddesses I was worshipping and I declared my conviction in the Lord Jesus Christ. I also announced at home about my faith and I started following Jesus. As I started sharing my conviction with others it was not accepted by many.

In 2008 every property and possession of mine was destroyed. There were at least over 200 rioters chased me but God rescued me from their hand. They kept scolding me with abusive words and intended to assassinate but I could manage to reach the relief camp and sheltered there for several months. After the camp closed I along with my family lived outside of our village until 2012. However, seeing the old age condition of our parents we had to go home to take care of our parents. On our return, though there was a fear around us we had no choice left but to return home. We trusted in the Lord and we continued our services to the Lord. Few families returned to the old faith. And one of the reasons they returned to their old faith was for the sake of fear and who didn't return their land that was encroached by their Hindu neighbors. Even in my case, they had two meetings against me to remove me from the village but God has been faithful thus far. I

keep getting threats yet trusting in the Lord my family and I live here in the village.

Summary of Major Findings

The researcher has come up with at least six major findings through the analysis of data collected. These six points reveal the situation of the Kandhamal church as a whole, especially regarding the status of Christian leaders and the believers and the needed recommendation for the restoration of the church.

The researcher reveals that question number seven is evident with a report that out of 28 participant leaders only three leaders have gone through formal theological education. The rest of the leaders or pastors are lacking the theological training needed to be more effective in the church. It would be a mammoth task for the leaders to go for any formal education as such in the existing status but the need for theological education is identified.

On the other hand, since there is strong law and socio-political forces in Kandhamal district, it is important that each pastor or Christian worker affiliate themselves with mainline churches and steps should be taken to find government approval of their service to the Christian community. Otherwise, the believers become prime victims because of no strong leadership. Certainly, government approval would make a significant change in nurturing and serving the believers in the district.

The Six Major Findings

1. The growth of Christianity in district Kandhamal created a socio-political threat in the context of Indian politics, especially for those parties who carry the Hindu ideology to make India a Hindu nation.
2. There is disunity among the denominational-biased churches and leaders.

3. The frequent threats and lack of resources caused the believers not to return home and though some returned they had to convert to the Hindu faith through *Ghar Wapasi*, which means returning back home or “re-converting back to Hindu faith”.
4. The leaders have a role in meeting the needs of the believers, especially in the context of spiritual and moral strength.
5. Periodic fellowship with believers and providing them with basic teachings that build a strong bridge to their leaders is possible.
6. There is a failure of the Government to ensure the security of the minority, and journalism fell short of journalism ethics.

CHAPTER 5

LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

The district Kandhamal has witnessed riots from time to time. Though the church stands vulnerable before the fanatics and before other faiths, the leadership of the church has yet to awake. This research found at least six major findings and includes eight proposals to bring the restoration of the Christian church, especially in the context of riot victims. Though the district is known for being the district with the second-largest Christian community in Odisha state, it always falls prey to enemies. The church leaders need to consider these findings and outcomes to bring the church into restoration and keep it healthy in the coming days thus preparing the church with a sound doctrine to face this type of unprecedented and unfortunate incidents that may occur in the future.

Major Findings

First Finding: The growth of Christianity in district Kandhamal created a socio-political threat in the context of Indian politics, especially for those parties who carry the Hindu ideology to make India a Hindu nation.

Though the riot at Kandhamal was socio-religious it was also politically motivated. Caste and religious practices are often a cause of conflict between ST Hindus and ST and SC Christians. The gradual growth of the Christian church not only increased the believers' number in the church, but it has also caused political tension in the district Kandhamal. One of the advantages the Kandhamal Christians witnessed is that the church has encouraged the believers to become educated which shows the social transformation in the Christian community. Out of 28 participants, 15 of them, on question number 1 from the leaders' questionnaire, claim that the

overall status of the local Christians is much better in comparison with other dwellers in the district, and four participants say it is better. There are some places where the reach out is a challenge even today, and the challenges for education are enormous. In question number 2 from the leaders' questionnaire, results show that over 75% of local dwellers have a good opinion about Christians.

Jeyaraj says, "Christians not only provide education and involvement in social activities, but they also do stand for justice and Christian values and in return, they face the target from Hindu fundamentals" (Jeyaraj 4). One of the most important things for Christians in Kandhamal is that the Scheduled Caste has been recognized in the society after they turned to Christianity. Griffiths says,

Our chief concern has always been with anything that helps us to get the bare necessities of life and as the missionaries didn't consider us untouchable; Panas began to become Christians to get their help... Roman Bastray, a survivor of a communal attack in Kandhamal in 1988 who was born in a Christian family is recorded in a separate account saying, "There were widespread discrimination and untouchable in the area," but with education, the status of Panas improved, and "this newfound confidence led many Dalits to become Christians" (Griffiths 26).

Besides all these things, Christianity has been presented as a foreign religion due to its food and lifestyle habits. The political leadership and the Government of Odisha BJP and BJD have taken issues such as "conversion" and "cow slaughtering" for their political gain from Hindus by causing feelings of hatred between the Hindu and Christian communities. In this political polarization, BJP wings have been working among the Tribal influencing and campaigning against Christian neighbors.

Biblical and Theological Foundation. Riots and acts of violence are part of the prophetic experience in the Bible. Green says, “encountering the persecution was part of the Jewish heritage” (Green 902). Further also says, “The persecution comes from within and from outside the community, especially from the society and political circle the Christians live. Two significant groups play a key role in the persecution of Christian in the early centuries such as Jews and the Romans” (Green 902). Though there were no such rules sanctioned to persecute Christians during the time of Roman rule, in the later part the Christian church at Rome suffered inhuman treatment at the command of Emperor Nero (Beare 737). One of the key reasons for persecution and violence was the differences in faith and lifestyle that Christians followed and practiced (Gerhard 19).

According to Elwell’s quoting from Judges 8:16 and Mk 9:38-41, “there is clear evidence that good people have been persecuted” (Elwell 501). The mission of God does not promise comfort alone. The way of Jesus the Messiah, through suffering to glory, is exemplary for his disciples. Christian suffering for Christ is a continuation of the suffering of Christ, and it is from him only that it receives its characteristic mark (John 17:18; 20:21). The fruit of martyrdom remains a grace from God (John 12:24). Question numbers 10 and 11 from the leaders’ questionnaire says “despite fierce attacks and continual threats, there is 10% of growth in the number of believers and they come as the New converts from Hindu faith.”

India is a democratic country, but the present ruling party, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), is affiliated with Hindu ideology and has several religious wings that operate at the grassroots level in the community. The district Kandhamal is one of the places where the RSS religious wings such as Vishwa Hindu Parisad (VHP), Bajrang Dal, Sri Ram Sena, and a few others actively function. Their mission is to motivate

Tribal and politically support BJP which is the present ruling party in India. The 2008 riot was the outcome of the plot prepared by those religious wings supported by the political parties. The religious conversion from Hindu to Christian and the social transformation of the individuals has caused a great loss in the count of Hindu numbers and a political loss. It was more convenient to focus on the faith and religious conflict which then resulted in riot and caused great damage to Christians in the 2008 riot at district Kandhamal.

Second Finding: There is disunity among the denominational-biased churches and leaders

History records that “unity is strength.” The Kandhamal churches were known for their oneness and unity. The researcher has witnessed oneness among the churches, especially on special occasions that the Christian community organized. Unfortunately, a large number of denominations exist now, and believers are divided by their denominations and not by their doctrines alone. The believers’ questionnaire showed that out of 29 participants 11 represent independent churches. These independent churches include various denominations, and in most cases they are accountable to no one. A similar number of leader participants represent an independent ministry that does not come under any of the recognized churches.

Biblical and Theological Foundation: One of the perfect natures of God is His triune character. Though there are three persons they have one essence. The book of Acts stands as a witness for the first-century church and the adversary it faced. There has never been an easy road for the churches in the past since from the foundation of the church. 2 Cor 11: 26 says, “the reward of Gospel preaching was resulted in persecution by the Jews, Gentiles, and false teachers.” In the book of Acts chapter two through chapter six, the persecution of the churches is evident. Besides

their experience of persecution, growth is the most significant aspect of the church as a result or outcome of persecution. Acts five and six are the model chapters of accountability of wealth, leadership, and spiritual growth. As the believers in need gathered in Jerusalem, the apostles concentrated on preaching the Gospel and also cared for the physical need of the believers. Each of the activities performed to manage the group maintained discipline and accountability.

Out of 29 participants, 28 participants have lost either their property or something precious to them. Some have lost their family members who were attacked and killed during the riot. Unfortunately, neither during the riot nor past riots, none of the participants received any help from their neighboring churches. The help that was received was from the denomination they are affiliated with. There were few leaders who initiated help for the needy, but they considered the denomination that recipients were associated with. The believers' questionnaire makes evident the fact that there were some who lost everything they possessed and have not received any help from any of the neighboring churches nor any other denominational leaders.

During the riot and its aftermath there was biased care to the victims based on denominational discrimination. While some of the victims were provided more than enough required material, others who were taken care of by independent pastors or evangelists were left with nothing. One of the believers expressed his anguish saying, till date there is not even one leader who visited them to find their state of living though the whole village was severely affected by the riot.

Bible says in 1 Corinthians 12:27, the church is the body of Jesus Christ. This analysis of the concept of the body reveals the unity and diversity aspect of church function and remains committed to helping the needy. One part cannot function independently; they need to mutually depend on each other. Paul called the church of

Corinth to maintain discipline and unity to become more effective to witness the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the darkened world. There is no doubt that persecution will come, but the unity of the denominations and their leaders could avoid greater harm to their followers. The book of Acts talks extensively about unity, diversity, and care for each other. The Kandhamal churches and leadership should call for unity with each other especially when they sound different in their doctrines. Disunity among the Christian denominations harmed the Kandhamal church more than any other reason.

There have been some churches in Kandhamal that are recognized by the government of India, especially the Church of North India, Methodist Mission, and Baptist Mission. They are given special consideration and legal rights to practice and preach the Gospel among the community. Many Christian ministers call themselves independent ministers and come under no recognized body. They are the most vulnerable before the fanatics.

Each of the Christian ministers should affiliate with those mainline churches to find better scope to minister in the given context. Finding support from the mainline churches could provide a morale boost, and they will not be as vulnerable before the fanatics. Most of the leaders have also noticed that this as an issue at Kandhamal, and they recommend that all the independent ministers come under the legal affiliated body to keep the body of Christ healthy. There is clear evidence that good people have been persecuted (Judg 8:16; Mk 9:38-41).

The literature review and the interviews suggest that due to the lack of recognition from any legal corner the churches have been found vulnerable and weak before the fanatics. The Bible says that in the context of showing faith, believers need to follow the given principles prescribed by the government. God is the God of order and appoints the leaders to rule. Service to the Lord should not let believers disobey

or disregard government-prescribed protocols. Putting things in order and following them as Christian ministers would always be an advantage and would certainly provide security for the leaders and the Christian community as well.

3. The frequent threats and lack of resources caused the believers not to return home and though some returned they had to convert to the Hindu faith through *Ghar Wapasi*, which means returning back home or “re-converting back to Hindu faith”.

Even before the riot began there were frequent threats against Christian churches. The Christians are the minority community in the Kandhamal district. Though a large number of people are educated, they are not privileged due to the caste system that exists in the community and the country itself. The constitution has provisions to accept any religion, but in conversion to the Christian faith a person loses all privileges they once received as a Hindu.

Faiz Ahmad Faiz claims that in the 1970s and 1980s VBP concentrated on reconversion from Christian faith to Hindu faith, and the first-ever religious riot was in 1987 after which the attacks against the Christian churches began in Kandhamal. He also records that, “a leader of VHP, Swami Laxamananda Saraswati, could convert 18000 Christians into Hindu faith during his stay in Kandhama” (Faiz, “Crossed and Crucified”). Nayak also mentions, “if a Dalit Hindu converts to Christianity, but he/she also loses the special privileges he/she was enjoying prescribed by the Government being in Hindu faith “(Nayak 111-112). Ramani mentions “one of the leaders of that fundamentalist by name Satyajit Digal uttered the statement repeatedly saying, ‘we don’t want to see any Christians in Kandhamal” (Ramani, They don’t Feel Sorry”). At the same time Odisha VHP General secretary Gauri Prasad Rath stated on Sunday August 24th, 2008 that, “for the death of Swamy,

we would give a fitting reply to Christian very soon” (Response on Anti-Christian).

As a result, the riot broke against Christians, and Christians suffered a great loss.

Many Christians were left with nothing.

Biblical and Theological foundation. God is the God of care, and He would not leave his children to go without help. Guthrie quotes from E. G. Seluyn saying, “if suffering comes, God must have a purpose in it” (Guthrie 98). God delivered the Israelites under the leadership of Moses, and as they journeyed, God himself became their source of protection and provision. God provided for Elizah even when Elizah was in the forest and was out of reach. Jeremiah was rescued time and again during the time of Jehoiakim. Green says, “the people who faced persecution felt living for God and their conviction in God became a lifestyle.” It could be said that God became their shield and their provision in the time of their need.

During the riot, all the Christians who left the village lived in the refugee camps due to fear and threats from the Hindu fanatics. Most of the Christians lived in the refugee camps until the camps were shut, and they were forced to return home. Having considered the adversarial situation in the village some of the believers decided to return home despite knowing the threats, and some chose not to return home. In return, some had to agree on the conditions placed before them by the Hindu leaders of the village. Though all those conditions were against the conviction of their Christian faith, they had no choice but to agree to them in order to return to their homes. Some Christian believers who did not compromise preferred not to return home and went out of the district to live.

At the same time, some who returned home faced struggles to survive since their property was burnt and the land was occupied by the local Hindus who have made their lives difficult and hopeless. Question number 10 from the believers'

questionnaire shows that there are a couple of families who had to return to the Hindu faith. Question number 16 from the leaders' questionnaire also reports that at least a couple of families have yet to return to the village. One of the main reasons they have stated was, "No Work" was to be found in the village since most of them survive by their daily laborer work. Some of the believers shared that their property was occupied by force and would only be returned with a condition that they not attend church or take part in Christian activities. Having no choices, some of them live a pseudo-Hindu life though now they are attending church again after a few years of a peaceful normal situation.

4. The leaders have a role in meeting the needs of the believers, especially in the context of spiritual and moral strength

To be accountable is a spiritual service. There should be accountability from the leaders to the believers and from the believers to the leaders. Independent Christian ministers owe no accountability to anyone. The service to the Lord demands accountability. In the post-riot scenario while threats were very high, especially for the leaders, and most of the leaders were threatened to leave villages they served, it was each leader who had to decide either to withstand threats or to leave the village and migrate to a safe place. It is an expected duty and responsibility for a leader or a pastor to remain with victims and provide them care and comfort. Some of the believers shared their opinion about their church leaders, especially those independent leaders who never visited their victims even after the situation was calm, and one of the believers said that even today the leaders have not visited to learn about their condition. Question number seven from the believers' questionnaire shows that half of the participants expressed their partial satisfaction over the role of church leaders after the riot. Asking whether they are satisfied with their role after the riot, eight out of the

28 leaders expressed their dissatisfaction, and two expressed their partial satisfaction. The absence of leadership affected the church in its restoration; the leaders' presence in the church in the post-riot period could have made the believers more bold and hopeful. Question numbers 3 and 4 from the believers' questionnaire show that the helplessness of the believers in the context of their leader's absence was greatly felt.

Biblical and Theological Foundation: The Bible teaches in John 21:15 -17 that, "Jesus has commanded his disciples to feed the sheep." Feeding the sheep may cause hardship for the shepherd who may have to pay the cost for carrying, yet the imperative nature of the statement demands an obligatory response toward the higher authority and God himself. The severe persecution in Jerusalem brought the leaders together, and they took care of the needy believers. In Acts, chapter four through six, the role of the leaders is evident, and the work of God is manifested through the provision and protection of God. Scorgie says, "to be persecuted may simply be meant, to suffer because of one's conviction, and punished or harassed inflicting injury, grieve or afflict" (Scorgie 668), but it never forced the leaders to hide from the difficult situation. Acts 11:19-20 witnessed that the persecution of Stephen and his death caused the Gospel to spread to Jews in Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, and it also helped it to spread among Gentiles in Antioch. The death of Stephen gave birth to Antioch as a mission center for missionary activities. Kruger, quoting from Acts 21:24, says "the persecution could not stop Gospel preaching rather preaching the word of God increased and multiplied" (Kruger 152). Paul in Phil 1:29 says, "it was a privilege not only of believers in Christ but of suffering for Christ as well." The suffering was something for which they had been destined (1 Thess 3:1-4; 2 Tim 3:12). Paul believed that his suffering filled up what was lacking in Christ's affliction for the sake of the church (Col 1:24; Gerhard, 19). The suffering for Paul was not a

painful experience for it was out of the permissive will of God (Heb 6:3). Sauer says, “A Christian never suffers alone and a Christian martyred never dies alone but is always a part of the body of Christ which sustains him or her” (1 Pet 5:9; Sauer 271).

One of the most befitting replies came from questions number five and six, as it claimed people converted to Christianity due to seducement or due to certain benefits they have received from the missionaries, but all 29 participants strongly appealed that “they are Christians because of their conviction in the Lord.” The riots and acts of violence against Christians are not new, yet the conviction of believers surpasses all the odds they keep facing. The witness of the nun who was paraded naked and raped stands tall amid chaos. Most Christians lost their lifetime earnings, and their dear ones were martyred, yet they sound hopeful. Out of 29 participants, 28 witnessed that they attend church regularly and are hopeful.

Most of the independent ministers were very worried about themselves and their believers. No doubt they have received frequent threats like other organized leaders, but the independent ministers sounded more concerned about the believers than mainline church leaders. One of the believers testified that an independent church leader approached the village, which was burnt completely, promising to provide some help to them. He also took photos of the debris of the destroyed houses promising he would support in restoring their houses and church that was demolished. However, in a few days when the villagers approached him, he denied them any of such help or support as of his promise to them.

Accountability has been a challenge in the leadership among Kandhamal leaders. Those who function independently are especially not accountable to anyone. Coming under an organized body or denomination could provide more transparency and accountability regarding finance and leadership. Since there is no accountability,

some of the Christian leaders escaped to a distant place leaving their believers in the refugee camps and later in the villages. They did not pay attention to the condition of their believers, and the church was neglected. Finding no counseling or hope from their leaders the believers felt helpless to be revived. Though they had the spiritual willpower and hope for the future, they were weak in moral strength due to negligence by their leaders. On the other hand, the churches where pastors and Christian ministers were there with their believers for every single second were able to revive in no time.

5. Periodic fellowship with believers and providing them with basic teachings that build a strong bridge to their leaders is possible.

The Kandhamal community is known for its rich social life and fellowships in general. However, as the seed of hatred is sown by the politicians and the fanatics the community has become sharply divided between Christians and local Tribals.

The church was known for oneness and close community life with periodic fellowships; the gradual entry of various denominations has destroyed the oneness of the Christian community and divided the believers based on their denominations. The enemy became strong during the riot not because the Christian community was weak but because the Christian community was fractured. Though there had been riots and threats earlier, the leaders have never considered the core cause of such repeated threats.

Question numbers 17, 18, and 19 show the need for Christians to get together and fellowship after the 2008 riot in Kandhamal. The leaders' guidance was one of the most effective means to help believers not to give up their convictions during such hard times. The leaders and the believers who remained back home in the village despite threats helped their churches revive faster in the post-riot period due to their

active participation in the church activities. The post-riot period was the time where the believers needed help from their leaders, whether social, spiritual, or psychological. Some churches or leaders could not organize such fellowships, and they have taken a long time to restore normalcy in the church or are closed down and not able to even today. The conviction of the believers was the key during these times yet the role of the leaders and their intervention was highly valued.

Biblical and Theological Foundation. The Bible shows the effective role of leaders in a time of crisis. Abraham, Moses, Joseph, Esther, and others are significant as leaders to encourage followers to remain in the Lord. Paul reminds the Roman believers in Rom 8:6-8; Rom 3:10-18 that, riots and violence consist of the antipathy of evil toward the good. Jesus indicated that since the world hated him, it will hate his disciples also (John 15:18-20). and he declared that if they persecuted him, they will also persecute his disciples (John 15:20). Timothy makes it clear in 2 Timothy 3:12, “everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” It was an important task for the leaders to remain to teach and exhort the believers in those periodic fellowships. Paul interpreted his suffering in terms of the cross of Christ, his death, and suffering (1 Cor 8:8-13; 2 Cor 1:3-10; Phil 3:10-11). Hence in 1 Cor 15:31 Paul exclaimed saying, “I die every day!” Paul’s willingness to suffer preceded his life for the church and makes him a perfect example for the believers (Gal 4:2-15; Phil 1:3-7; 4:14-15; 2 Tim 1:8). Paul’s invitation to the believers to suffer is a voluntary act because this suffering provided identification with Christ (Rom 8:17; Phil 1:29-30; 2 Tim 3:12). Peter significantly appeals to his audience, especially the slaves, to do good even when suffering unjustly for it (1 Pet 3:14-17). Further, Peter encourages his believers to consider it joy even when they are insulted for the name of Christ.

The agony Christ faced was for the sake of deliverance of the sinners. The New Testament presents Christ as a suffering servant. Hence all Christian martyrdom has its basic foundational orientation and footing in Jesus Christ, the “faithful and true witness” (Rev 1:5; 3:14; 1 Pet 2:21-24; Heb 2:14-18). Sauer says, to Jesus the crucifixion was not at all a tragic failure of his mission, but rather its very fulfillment (Sauer 269). Therefore, Christian suffering for Christ is a continuation of the suffering of Christ, and it is from him only that it receives its characteristic mark (John 17:18; 20:21). Suffering and martyrdom are not ends in themselves but serve God’s mission right to the end time and are linked to mission by multiple relationships (Mt 24:14). Suffering is also a test for the genuineness of the mission rather than a mishap to be avoided at all costs.

Though there have been riots time and again in Kandhamal, the role of leaders remains significant. According to a PUCL (People’s Union for Civil Liberties) report, the riot caused 39 deaths; 3 people went missing; 415 villages were affected; 3,776 houses were torched; 195 churches and prayer houses were damaged, and 25,177 people sheltered in relief camps. The riot has brought hopelessness and helplessness among the believers and the leaders as well. However, some leaders had committed themselves to never give in to fear but to stand strong and be engaged in rebuilding the dispersed church back to unity as soon as possible. However, there was another kind of leader who failed to organize any emergency fellowships and caused believers to be demoralized in their faith and hope.

The leaders of Kandhamal should engage in periodic fellowships besides their regular Sunday activities. Some churches frequently practiced fellowship, encouraged each other, shared concerns, and as a result the broken and lost would find hope in following their conviction. Unfortunately, few churches failed to organize any such

fellowships or workshops to encourage the believers and still find it difficult to restore and recover normal church functions. The fellowship could be the means of providing encouragement, sharing concerns, and building social bonds to encourage each other. Fellowships would build a strong bridge between the believers and the leaders and would serve as means of encouragement besides other activities in the church.

6. There is a failure of the Government to ensure the security of the minority, and journalism fell short of journalism ethics.

Interestingly, though the district Kandhamal is known for its hospitality and common community lifestyle, the sharp division of Kandhas and Panas has been evident ever since the Hindu fundamentalists entered the district. Kandhas and Panas are not only divided by caste and culture but also by belief systems such as Hindu and Christian. When a Hindu Kandha or Pana converts to Christianity, they ultimately lose any privileges they received from the government for being Hindu.

The low employment ratio within the Christian community becomes challenging in certain contexts with government officials. Most of the officials are occupied by Kandha Hindu candidates, and Christians, though educated, are left without any job privileges. Due to this the Christian community often remains vulnerable. The media in Kandhamal has been controlled by the Hindu leaders, and they prescribe the content of each event and news broadcast. In most cases the journalism falls short of journalism ethics, and the Kandhamal riot is one of such incidents.

Questions number three through nine address the role of the media and its impact. In the context of journalism ethics, questions number eight and nine are clear that the role of the media was significantly manipulated and that caused loss of property, loss of life, and hatred between the two communities in Kandhamal.

Biblical and Theological Foundation. The religious riot and violence may be caused by various reasons, such as jealousy (Gen 4:2-10), against good work (1 Sam 21:1-19), revenge for condemning wicked work (Jer 37; Matt 4:1-12), vengeance against preaching the gospel (Acts 7:54-60), or faithfulness to the Lord Jesus (2 Cor 11:16-33; Gal6: 17). Beare says, “though there was no such rule sanctioned to persecute Christian during the time of Roman rule, in the latter part, the Christian church at Rome suffered inhuman treatment at the command of Emperor Nero” (Beare 737). However, the believers remained convinced of the Gospel they have received. Zuke says Christ sets a perfect example for the rest of the believers, as though Christ was rejected by his own, he was foreordained by His father for the task (Zuke 445).

The initiation Jesus established brings a strong expectation that his followers endure the pain till the end and remain victorious in Him (Matt 24:13; Rev 7-8). The call from God and the relationship with Jesus assure salvation for those who follow him sincerely (Zuke 446). Sauer says, “Paul’s apostolic suffering was instrumental because it serves to bring the Gospel to those who need to be saved and to keep faithful those who have been saved” (Sauer 271). No doubt that in most cases “religious riots has led to the multiplication of the church” (Sauer 272).

The literature review shows that even when the fanatics executed their plans systematically the police and the administration remained non-reactive to the execution of their plans. In most cases, the local governmental authority remained as mere spectators. The local administration imposed Article Number 144 according to the Indian constitution that prohibits the gathering of people. Reports say over 20,000-30,000 fanatics had been gathered at the Ashram and planned to attack Christians at Kandhamal.

Patnaik says that most of the television channels of Odisha such as ETV, OTV, Door Darshan, and Oriya dailies failed to analyze the causes of the riot. Passing premature judgment all those broadcasting channels alleged Christians as the reason for the riot. This may have caused unrest among the communities, and the mob attacks were initiated upon Christian communities. The media played a vital role in painting the communal color to the incident that occurred, and the context of the riot was completely permissive. The statements from affected Christians have been deliberately ignored. Reporter Kedar Mishra stated that the newspapers have continually printed opinions, thoughts, and advertisements of the VHP, the Bajrang Dal, and all other similar organizations in such a manner as if they were opinions of the newspapers themselves (Mishra, Kandhamal Riot)

The Kandhamal riot in 2008 was a religious conflict, and the government completely failed to provide security to Christian minorities. Though Christians asked for protection from the government, there was no protection given, and Christian houses and property were torched; believers and Christian ministers were killed, and a large number of Christians were left homeless. Not only that, the government failed to reestablish Christian minorities in the village in the post-riot period.

Ministry Implications of the Findings

The finding from this research reveals the status of the church twelve years after the riot in 2008. The research also revealed the status of believers and leaders and their response toward the riots they have faced. The researcher has highlighted a few of the findings needed to bring the church into a normal functional position. The researcher has drawn six key issues and eight suggestions for both the believers and the Christian leaders to implement and practice for the betterment of the church in the future. The researcher has analyzed the situation by talking to leaders and the

believers who are victims of riots and have experienced post-riot effects for the past 12 years. There is no doubt the church at Kandhamal has witnessed many riots, but 2008 was one of the most severe riots, and the church failed to restore its normal function in the post-riot period. It is time for the church to consider the proposed findings and help the church be ready to face any unexpected situations that appear in the future. The leadership of the church needs to assess the proposed findings and look seriously to provide hope for the church to remain healthy.

Limitations of the Study

Though there were several restrictions during this pandemic period the researcher has tried to explore the best possible results. The finding of the research is an application to the district Kandhamal alone. Though the suggestions given could be applied to other places, the situation in Kandhamal in 2008 was unique because it included political, social, caste, and religious dynamics. The researcher has considered both leaders and the believers since both have experienced the riot with equal measure. Though the researcher preferred to include female church leaders, only male leaders were included due to the pandemic prohibitory order. There was no intention to only include men, but due to the pandemic restrictions, the researcher the scope to male leaders alone. However, the researcher has included both male and female believers in data collection. The female believers' participation was significant because as the male members of the family escaped to hide in the jungle and distant places, the female had to face all the rioters and experienced the abuses more than men. The research was carried out among leaders and believers of all denominations, including Roman Catholic, since all of them were victims of the 2008 riot.

Unexpected Observations

Though people had an unforgettable experience during the time of the riot and most of them spent as many as twelve days in the dark jungle, they have never lost their hope in the Lord. Listening to each of the believers was a painful experience and several times I broke down. Yet each of the believers ended with the statement, “God is faithful with us and he has protected us. He has been providing all we need and even more.” One of the most exciting and unexpected things I learned from the believers is “they trust the Lord now more than ever before.” Even, three believers whose dear ones were martyred during this riot were found to be hopeful, and their confidence in the Lord is commendable.

Recommendations

Having considered all those findings there are at least eight important strategies to follow and practice to strengthen the body of Christ even when there is such strong persecution facing.

1. Never cease to teach and educate the church believers. There may be a strong adversary, yet the leaders of the church must and should encourage the church to remain progressive in their education and social transformation in witnessing their conviction in the Lord.
2. Leaders should pay more attention and be more concerned for the believers. Some believers shared their displeasure towards their leaders who abandoned them during their troubled times, and the leaders who stood by their believers were able to reestablish the church faster and could gain the confidence of their believers.
3. Theological education for every church leader, especially for the pastors, missionaries, and evangelists, is preferred. This simply means anyone who is

dedicated to serving the Lord as a full-time minister must prepare himself or herself with a sound understanding of the Bible to keep the believers healthy and matured.

4. Engage and prepare future leaders with sound information. The youth of the church and upcoming generations should be given special concern. Church leadership can pay special attention to preparing young believers to engage themselves for active community service. The upcoming generation should also be encouraged to engage in education, which is the key means to grow and maintain respectable standards. The churches could initiate workshops to generate interest among the students in building future leaders.

5. Have frequent fellowship. Fellowship in the church should be one of the most important activities of the church. These fellowships could be a social gathering, a meal, a workshop, or Bible study. The church and its leadership should schedule such programs and pursue them regularly.

6. Do not just preach, but teach sound doctrine to the believers. Unless the leaders are trained to interpret the scripture without error, it would be a challenging task for them to comprehend and face certain situations. The church should not only be a Sunday fellowship and run the traditional program, but there should and must be scripture exposition to strengthen the faith of the believer. Each believer should be aware of what and why they believe. In the context of Kandhamal, since the churches are built within a closed community, building inter-personal relationships would be easier than in city churches.

7. Despite all their differences, the churches in Kandhamal district should come under one umbrella and stand in one unity. There could be doctrinal differences yet unity in diversity gives more scope in reaching out to many souls and gives strength in troubled times. While the government is merely a spectator during hard times for

Christians, the united Christian front would boost the life of the Christian community better.

8. Stand by the believers in all situations. Most of the believers expressed their anguish and displeasure against their pastors and leaders. Some leaders found a safe haven and sheltered during the riot leaving their believers alone before the enemy. The leaders who stood by the believers were able to gain the trust and were able to revive their churches in no time. The leaders who did not stand with their believers in their hard times have lost trust with the believers. As a shepherd, the pastor must remain with the believers in their good and bad times.

Postscript

Though I have heard about the persecution from my parents who were present during the riot and also were victims, I had no personal experience. I had the privilege to talk to leaders and believers who experienced it second by second and never broke nor ever have a pinch of doubt on God for this evil happening to them. I felt the need for the right leadership among the Christian community who will be committed to themselves for the good of believers. I am overwhelmed and blessed listening to the believers and their testimonies. Some have expressed that God had rescued them from the sharp swords and flying bullets. Some have expressed that it seems God has blinded the eyes of rioters to not see the believers hiding in small bushes. Some have expressed that in chilling cold and never-ending rain they slept in the jungle but never felt sick. Most of the leaders and believers said one thing, that though they spent their days and nights in the thick mountain, not a single case was reported of them being harmed by any insects. Finally, as I am encouraged to trust in the Lord, I do encourage the Kandhamal churches to remain faithful to the Lord.

APPENDIXES

A. Self-Declaration Letter

Dear Sir/ Madam

Greetings in Jesus Name

I am Rev. Lalit Kumar Nayak, hails from Bodimunda, Kandhamal, Odisha. Having completed my M. Th. from Hindustan Bible College and Seminary in 2005, Chennai, I have been teaching in various Theological Seminaries. I am engaged in youth and pastoral ministries. Right now I am based in Bengaluru, Karnataka and simultaneously pursuing my Doctor of Ministry (D. Min) program from Asbury Theological Seminary, Kentucky, USA, since 2018. As a part of my research, I am allowed to study the District Kandhamal, especially concerning ...the 2008 riot against Christians with recommendations for the restoration of the church. I am planning to visit each individual of you for your support in asking your opinions and experience on the given subject. Hence I request your kind cooperation to provide me your consent by accepting my invitation for you to be a part of my research program to make our Christian community a healthy and well-being community. Having submitted your consent to Asbury Seminary, I will be progressing my interviews and sharing questionnaires to each of you seeking your opinions and assistance to make my research a blessing to the Christian community in Kandhamal. I assure you that, your given consent or each statement received by me would remain undisclosed and only will be used for the above-mentioned research work alone.

Yours sincerely

Rev. Lalit Kumar Nayak
Kor-In Theological College and Seminary
Vadagur, Kemboldi – PO
Kolar District, Karnataka
India – 563103
E.Mail. lalitikumar2008@gmail.com
Phone: +91-9901655016/ +91-8618438213

NB: Please reply to me through mail or over a Phone Call or WhatsApp message using the given numbers.

B. INFORMED CONSENT LETTER (for the leaders)**Title: Kandhamal Riot 2008: Its Impact on Current and Future Christian Community.**

The researcher Mr. Lalit Kumar Nayak, hails from Bodimunda, Kandhamal, Odisha. He has been serving as a Biblical teacher for the past fifteen years in various Theological Seminaries across India. He has been a Doctor of Ministry student in Asbury Theological Seminary, Kentucky, USA since 2018. For the research purpose, he is interviewing people with knowledge and experience of the incident.

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Mr. **Lalit Kumar Nayak** from the Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because your contribution to the Christian society at Kandhamal, Odisha is remarkable and appreciated. Considering your service and your leadership, you have been regarded as a part of this study. The researcher appreciates your contribution and your openness by participating in the research work to create a healthy Christian community in Kandhamal, Odisha.

If you agree to be part of the researcher's study, you will be asked to participate and assist in providing the relevant information the researcher seeks from you. The data collected will only be used for this research alone. If anyone else is given information about you, they will not know your name. A number or initials will be used instead of your name. The researcher assures that every information is collected will be kept under the custody of the researcher. The audio and video will be kept password-protected in a hard disk and the hard copy will be kept locked under the researcher's care. The researcher also makes sure that, having approved the research work by the mentor and academic office the collected data will be destroyed, such as soft data will be deleted permanently and the hard copy will be burnt completely.

If something makes you feel uncomfortable while you are participating, please inform the researcher. If you decide at any time you do not want to finish the study, you may stop whenever you want. You are free and can ask any questions to the researcher, Mr. Lalit Kumar Nayak at any time about anything regarding this study.

(Revised IRB, LALIT KUMAR NAYAK Addendum) Your participation is highly valued. However, if there is any question you do not wish to answer you do not have to answer. You are also free to approach your concerned pastor and/or family member if you wish to have their support for you.

Signing this paper means that you have read this or had it read to you and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not sign the paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be made accountable if you do not sign this paper or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do. Feel free to contact in bellow given details if any issue arises.

Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study

Date Signed

C. INFORMED CONSENT LETTER FOR THE BELIEVERS

Title: Kandhamal Riot 2008: Its Impact on Current and Future Christian Community.

The researcher Mr. Lalit Kumar Nayak hails from Bodimunda, Kandhamal, Odisha. He has been serving as a Biblical teacher for the past fifteen years in various Theological Seminaries across India. He has been a Doctor of Ministry student in Asbury Theological Seminary, Kentucky, USA since 2018. For the research purpose, he is interviewing people with knowledge and experience of the incident.

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Mr. **Lalit Kumar Nayak** from the Asbury Theological Seminary. In considering your active participation in the Church and your experience during the riot in Kandhamal, Odisha, you have been invited to be a part of this study. During the interviews, the researcher will be recording either video or audio form. The researcher appreciates your contribution and your openness by participating in the research work to create a healthy Christian community in Kandhamal, Odisha.

If you agree to be part of the researcher's study, you will be asked to participate and assist in providing the relevant information the researcher seeks from you. The data collected will only be used for this research alone. If anyone else is given information about you, they will not know your name. A number or initials will be used instead of your name. The researcher assures that every information is collected will be kept under the custody of the researcher. The audio and video will be kept password-protected in a hard disk and the hard copy will be kept locked under the researcher's care. The researcher also makes sure that, having approved the research work by the mentor and academic office the collected data will be destroyed, such as soft data will be deleted permanently and the hard copy will be burnt completely.

If something makes you feel uncomfortable while you are participating, please inform the researcher. If you decide at any time you do not want to finish the study, you may stop whenever you want. You are free and can ask any questions to the researcher, Mr. Lalit Kumar Nayak at any time about anything regarding this study.

Your participation is highly valued. However, if there is any question you do not wish to answer you do not have to answer. You are also free to approach your concerned pastor and/or family member if you wish to have their support for you.

Signing this paper means that you have read this or had it read to you and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not sign the paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be made accountable if you do not sign this paper or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do. Feel free to contact in bellow given details if any issue arises.

Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study

Date Signed

D. QUESTION FOR THE LEADERS

Title: Kandhamal Riot 2008: Its Impact on Current and Future Christian Community.

A. QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEW FOR THE CHRISTIAN LEADERS

1. Name (Optional):
2. Gender:
3. Age:
4. Denomination:.....
5. Name of the Church/Organization
6. Designation: Pastor/ Evangelist/Ministry Director/Lay Leader/Others [√]
7. Qualifications:
8. How long are you in this position:

Questions

1. What is the comparative status of the local Christians (Social/ Educational/ Economical), in comparison with other dwellers in your town/ village?

Much Better	Better	Same as others	Worse than Others	Much worse than others

2. What is the opinion of the locals about Christians in District Kandhamal?

Very Good	Good	Fair	Bad	Very Bad

3. Were you present at Kandhamal during the time of the riot against the Christians in 2008?

- a. Yes
- b. No

4. Were you a victim of the 2008 riot?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Partially

5. Where were you after the riot and how long?

Refugee camp	Remained in the village	Out of the District

6. How many families or members of your church were affected by the riot?

Whole Church	Selective members of the church	Partially	No

7. Mention any one reason for persecution/ riot against Christians in 2008 according to you?

- a. Social reason
- b. Political reason
- c. Economical reason
- d. Religious reason
- e. Not sure

8. Was the role of the media during the time of riot satisfactory?

The media played a good role	Media played no role	The media played a bad role	Others

9. What was the role of media aftermath in special reference to the Christian community?

The media played a good role	Media played no role	The media played a bad role	Others

10. Do you think any new members added to your church after the riot since 2008?

Less than 5	More than 5	Same members as before	Reduced compared to before	None

11. If there is an increase in membership in your church, where are the new members come from?

New Converts	Other Church believers	Migrants	Cannot say

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12. Have you done any survey of membership added to your church after the 2008 riot?

Yes periodically	No Never	Partially if required

13. Is there any record in the church or organization regarding the believers' number either added or reduced since 2008?

Not a regular record	Yes	No	Can't say

14. What are the major changes you have seen among Christians for the past 12 years after the 2008 riot?

- a. Method of worship pattern
- b. Believers are fearful
- c. Just Sunday service happening and no other church activities
- d. Any other (Specific)

15. Are you satisfied as a leader to see the contribution of local leadership for the Church to keep the church intact after the riot?

Yes	No	Partially

16. How many believers returned to your church after persecution in 2008?

Number of believers before the 2008 riot	Returned (%)	Did not return (%)	Reason for not returning if any

17. Is the Church playing any role for the church to function normally?

The role of the Church commendable	The role of the church not impressive	The role of the Church could have better	If any

18. How often Christians get together/ fellowships have been organized during the past 12 years?

Less than five	More than five	Frequently	Never

19. How many sessions Church/ Organization conducted to restore the confidence of the believers after the 2008 riot?

Once in a Year	No specific period	Frequently now and then	Never

20. What is the response of the believers after persecution now?

Normal	Still fearful	Partly Normal	Can't say

21. Would you share your experience in brief?

D1. QUESTION FOR THE LEADERS (ODIA TRANSLATION)

**ପ୍ରାସଙ୍ଗିକ : କନ୍ୟାମାଳ ଦଙ୍ଗା 2008: ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନର ଏବଂ ଭବିଷ୍ୟତ ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟିଆନ ସମ୍ପ୍ରଦାୟ
ଉପରେ ଏହାର ପ୍ରଭାବ |**

କନ୍ୟାମାଳ ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟିୟ ମଣ୍ଡଳୀର ଲିଡରମାନଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ଇଣ୍ଟରଭ୍ୟୁ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ |

1. ନାମ (optional):
2. ଲିଙ୍ଗ:
3. ବୟସ:
4. ମଣ୍ଡଳୀର ନାମ (Denomination):
5. ମଣ୍ଡଳୀ / ସଂଗଠନର ନାମ
6. ସାଧାରଣ ବୃତ୍ତି:
6. ପଦବୀ: ପାଳକ / ପ୍ରଚାରକ / ମନ୍ତ୍ରଣାଳୟର ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦେଶକ / ସ୍ତରୀୟ ନେତା / ଅନ୍ୟ [√]
7. ଯୋଗ୍ୟତା:
8. ଆପଣ ଏହି ସ୍ଥାନରେ କିମ୍ବା ପଦବୀରେ କେତେ ଦିନ/ ବର୍ଷ ଅଛନ୍ତି:

ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ ଗୁଡ଼ିକ

1. ଗାଁର ଅନ୍ୟ ବାସିନ୍ଦାଙ୍କ ତୁଳନାରେ ସ୍ଥାନୀୟ ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟିଆନମାନଙ୍କର ତୁଳନାତ୍ମକ ସ୍ଥିତି କଣ (ସାମାଜିକ /
ଶିକ୍ଷାଗତ / ରୋଜଗାର)?

ଅନ୍ୟ ବାସିନ୍ଦାଙ୍କ ତୁଳନାରେ ବହୁତ ଭଲ	ଭଲ ଅନ୍ୟ ବାସିନ୍ଦାଙ୍କ ତୁଳନାରେ ଖରାପ	ଅନ୍ୟ ବାସିନ୍ଦାଙ୍କ ତୁଳନାରେ ବହୁତ ଖରାପ

2. ଜିଲ୍ଲା କନ୍ୟାମାଳରେ ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟିଆନମାନଙ୍କ ବିଷୟରେ ସ୍ଥାନୀୟ ଲୋକଙ୍କ ମତ କଣ?

ବହୁତ ଭଲ	ଭଲ	ଯଥାର୍ଥ	ଖରାପ	ବହୁତ ଖରାପ

3. 2008 ରେ ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟିଆନଙ୍କ ବିରୁଦ୍ଧରେ ଦଙ୍ଗା ସମୟରେ ଆପଣ କନ୍ଧମାଳରେ ଉପସ୍ଥିତ ଥିଲେ କି?

- (କ) ହଁ
- (ଖ) ନା

4. ଆପଣ 2008 ଦଙ୍ଗାର ଶିକାର ହୋଇଥିଲେ କି?

- (କ) ହଁ
- (ଖ) ନା
- (ଗ) ଆଂଶିକ

5. ଦଙ୍ଗା ପରେ ଆପଣ କେଉଁଠାରେ ଥିଲେ ଏବଂ କେତେ ଦିନ?

ଶରଣାର୍ଥୀ ଶିବିରରେ	ଗାଁରେ ରହିଥିଲୁ	ଜିଲ୍ଲା ବାହାରେ

6. ଦଙ୍ଗା ଦ୍ୱାରା ଆପଣଙ୍କ ପରିବାର କିମ୍ବା ମଣ୍ଡଳୀର କେତେ ସଦସ୍ୟ ପ୍ରଭାବିତ ହୋଇଥିଲେ?

ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ବିଶ୍ୱାସୀ	ମନୋନୀତ ସଦସ୍ୟମାନେ	ଆଂଶିକ	ପ୍ରଭାବିତ ନୁହେଁ

7. ଆପଣଙ୍କ ଅନୁଯାୟୀ 2008 ରେ ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟିଆନଙ୍କ ଉପରେ ନିର୍ଯ୍ୟାତନା / ଦଙ୍ଗାର କୌଣସି କାରଣ

ଉଲ୍ଲେଖ କରନ୍ତୁ?

- (କ) ସାମାଜିକ କାରଣ |
- (ଖ) ରାଜନୈତିକ କାରଣ |
- (ଗ) ଅର୍ଥନୈତିକ କାରଣ |
- (ଘ) ଧାର୍ମିକ କାରଣ
- (ଙ) ନିଶ୍ଚିତ ନୁହେଁ |

8. ଦଙ୍ଗା ସମୟରେ ମିଡିଆର ଭୂମିକା ସନ୍ତୋଷଜନକ ଥିଲା କି?

ଗଣମାଧ୍ୟମ ଏକ ଭଲ ଭୂମିକା ଗ୍ରହଣ କଲା	ମିଡିଆ କୌଣସି ଭୂମିକା ନଥିଲା	ମିଡିଆ ଅନ୍ୟମାନଙ୍କ ଖରାପ ଭୂମିକା ଗ୍ରହଣ କଲା	ଅନ୍ୟ

9. ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟିଆନ ସମ୍ପ୍ରଦାୟର ବିଶେଷ ସନ୍ଦର୍ଭରେ ଗଣମାଧ୍ୟମର ଭୂମିକା କଣ ଥିଲା?

ଗଣମାଧ୍ୟମ ଏକ ଭଲ ଭୂମିକା ଗ୍ରହଣ କଲା	ମିଡିଆ କଣସି ଭୂମିକା ନଥିଲା	ଗଣମାଧ୍ୟମ ଅନ୍ୟମାନଙ୍କ ଖରାପ ଭୂମିକା ଗ୍ରହଣ କଲା	ଅନ୍ୟ

10. ଆପଣଙ୍କ ଅଭିଜ୍ଞତାରେ 2008 ର ଦଙ୍ଗା ପରେ ଆପଣଙ୍କ ମଣ୍ଡଳୀରେ କୌଣସି ନୂତନ ସଦସ୍ୟ ଯୋଡ଼ିଛନ୍ତି କି?

5 ରୁ କମ୍ ସଦସ୍ୟ	5 ରୁ ଅଧିକ	ପୂର୍ବ ପରି ସମାନ	ପୂର୍ବ ତୁଳନାରେ ହ୍ରାସ	କିଛି ନୁହେଁ

11. ଯଦି ଆପଣଙ୍କର ମଣ୍ଡଳୀରେ ସଦସ୍ୟତା ବୃଦ୍ଧି ହୋଇଛି, ନୂତନ ସଦସ୍ୟମାନେ କେଉଁଠାରୁ ଆସିଲେ?

ନୂତନ ରୂପାନ୍ତର	ଅନ୍ୟ ମଣ୍ଡଳୀର ବିଶ୍ୱାସୀମାନେ	ପ୍ରବାସୀମାନେ	କହିପାରିବି ନାହିଁ

12. 2008 ଦଙ୍ଗା ପରେ ଆପଣ ଆପଣଙ୍କର ଚର୍ଚ୍ଚରେ ଯୋଡ଼ି ହୋଇଥିବା ସଦସ୍ୟତାର କୌଣସି ସର୍ତ୍ତ କରୁଛନ୍ତି କି?

ହଁ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟାୟକ୍ରମେ	ନା କେବେନୁହେଁ	ଯଦି ଆବଶ୍ୟକ ହୁଏ ଆଂଶିକ

13. 2008 ଠାରୁ ବିଶ୍ୱାସୀଙ୍କ ସଂଖ୍ୟା ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ ମଣ୍ଡଳୀରେ କିମ୍ବା ସଂଗଠନରେ କୌଣସି ରେକର୍ଡ ଅଛି କି?

ନିୟମିତ ରେକର୍ଡ ନୁହେଁ	ହଁ	ନା	କହିପାରିବି ନାହିଁ

14. 2008 ଦଙ୍ଗା ପରେ ଗତ 12 ବର୍ଷ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଆପଣ ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟିଆନମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ପ୍ରମୁଖ

ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନଗୁଡ଼ିକ କଣ ଦେଖୁଛନ୍ତି?

- (କ) ପୂଜାର ପଦ୍ଧତି |
- (ଖ) ବିଶ୍ୱାସୀମାନେ ଭୟଭୀତ |
- (ଗ) କେବଳ ରବିବାର ସେବା ଘଟୁଛି ଏବଂ ଅନ୍ୟ କୌଣସି ଚର୍ଚ୍ଚ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକଳାପ ନାହିଁ |
- (ଘ) ଅନ୍ୟ କୌଣସି ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦିଷ୍ଟ ବିଷୟ

15. ଦଙ୍ଗା ପରେ ମଣ୍ଡଳୀକୁ ଅକ୍ଷୁଣ୍ଣ ରଖିବା ପାଇଁ ମଣ୍ଡଳୀର ସ୍ଥାନୀୟ ନେତୃତ୍ୱର ଅବଦାନ ଦେଖି ଆପଣ

ଜଣେ ନେତା ଭାବରେ ସନ୍ତୁଷ୍ଟ କି?

ହଁ	ଆଂଶିକ ଭାବରେ	ନୁହେଁ
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16. 2008 ର ନିର୍ଯାତନା ପରେ କେତେ ବିଶ୍ୱାସୀ ଆପଣଙ୍କ ମଣ୍ଡଳୀକୁ ଫେରିଲେ?

2008 ଦଙ୍ଗା ପୂର୍ବରୁ ବିଶ୍ୱାସୀ ସଂଖ୍ୟା	ଫେରସ୍ତ (%)	ଫେରି ନାହାଁନ୍ତି (%)	ନଫେରିବାର କାରଣ

17. ମଣ୍ଡଳୀ ସାଧାରଣ ଭାବରେ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ କରିବା ପାଇଁ କୌଣସି ଭୂମିକା ଗ୍ରହଣ କରୁଛି କି?

ମଣ୍ଡଳୀର ଭୂମିକା ପ୍ରଶଂସନୀୟ	ମଣ୍ଡଳୀର ଭୂମିକା ପ୍ରଭାବଶାଳୀ ନୁହେଁ	ମଣ୍ଡଳୀର ଭୂମିକା ଭଲ ହୋଇପାରେ	ଯଦି କୌଣସି କାରଣ

18. ବିଗତ 12 ବର୍ଷ ମଧ୍ୟରେ କେତେଥର ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟିୟ ବିଶ୍ୱାସୀ ସହଭାଗୀତା ସଂଗଠିତ ହେଉଛନ୍ତି ?

ପାଞ୍ଚରୁ କମ୍	ପାଞ୍ଚରୁ ଅଧିକ	ବାରମ୍ବାର	କଦାପି ନୁହେଁ

19. 2008 ଦଙ୍ଗା ପରେ ବିଶ୍ୱାସୀଙ୍କ ଆତ୍ମବିଶ୍ୱାସ ଫେରାଇବା ପାଇଁ ମଣ୍ଡଳୀ କିମ୍ବା ସଂଗଠନ କେତେ ଥର ଅଧିବେଶନ କରିଛି?

ବର୍ଷରେ ଥରେ	କୌଣସି ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦିଷ୍ଟ ଅବଧି ନାହିଁ	ସମୟ ସମୟ ରେ	କେବେ ନୁହେଁ

20. ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ନିର୍ଯାତନା ପରେ ବିଶ୍ୱାସୀଙ୍କ ପ୍ରତିକ୍ରିୟା କଣ?

ସାଧାରଣ	ଭୟଭୀତ	ଆଂଶିକ ଭାବରେ	କହିପାରିବ ନାହିଁ

21. ଆପଣ ନିଜ ଅଭିଜ୍ଞତାକୁ ସଂକ୍ଷେପରେ ଅଂଶୀଦାର କରିବେ କି?

E. QUESTION FOR THE BELIEVERS

Title: Kandhamal Riot 2008: Its Impact on Current and Future Christian Community.

QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS FOR THE NEW CONVERTS OR VICTIMS FOR THEIR FAITH

1. Name (Optional):
2. Gender:
3. Age:
4. Denomination:
5. Name of the Church/Organization
6. General profession:

Questions

1. How long have you been Christian?

From the past generations	First-generation	Last few years

2. Did you lose anything (property/ lives) during the riot in 2008?

- a. Yes (specify)
- b. No
- c. Partially (specify)

3. Did anyone help your shelter and food during rehabilitation after persecution?

- a. Government
- b. Churches in the neighbourhood
- c. NGOs
- d. None

4. Did anyone help you with your resettlement back at home from your loose after the 2008 riot?

- a. Government
- b. Churches in the neighbourhood
- c. NGOs
- d. None

5. What makes you remain in the Christian faith even after witnessing such a riot?

- a. Because of our conviction
- b. Because we have been receiving some material help
- c. Because of our background (forefathers)

6. Are you still attending the church after you returned home even after the riot?

- a. Regularly
- b. Occasionally
- c. No

7. What do you think about the effectiveness of the role of Church leaders after the riot?

Satisfactory	Not Satisfactory	Partially satisfactory	Cannot say

8. Are you free to worship in the Church?

Yes	No	Some times	With Conditions

9. Are there any of your members of the church yet to back to the Church?

Yes	No	How many

10. Is there any of your church members/ relatives reconverted to the Hindu faith?

Yes	No	No Comments

11. What is the present circumstance of your church regarding the freedom of your faith?

Good	Still doubtful	Not good	Cannot say

12. What is the response from your fellow Hindu neighborhood?

Cordial	Still doubtful	Not good	Cannot say

13. Share your personal experience with Christ before and after persecution?

E1. QUESTION FOR THE BELIEVERS (ODIA TRANSLATION)

ପ୍ରାସଙ୍ଗିକ : କନ୍ୟାଳ ଦଙ୍ଗା 2008: ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନର ଏବଂ ଭବିଷ୍ୟତ ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟିଆନ ସମ୍ପ୍ରଦାୟ ଉପରେ ଏହାର ପ୍ରଭାବ ।

ନୂତନ ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟ ବିଶ୍ୱାସୀ କିମ୍ବା ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟଙ୍କଠାରେ ବିଶ୍ୱାସ ପାଇଁ ନିର୍ଯ୍ୟାତନା ପାଇଥିବା ଲୋକଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ଲଖ୍ମରଭୂୟ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ ।

1. ନାମ (optional):
2. ଲିଙ୍ଗ:
3. ବୟସ:
4. ମଣ୍ଡଳୀର ନାମ (Denomination):
5. ମଣ୍ଡଳୀ / ସଂଗଠନର ନାମ
6. ସାଧାରଣ ବୃତ୍ତି:

ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ ଗୁଡ଼ିକ :

1. ଆପଣ ବିଗତ କେତେ ଦିନ/ କେତେ ବର୍ଷଠାରୁ ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟିଆନ ହୋଇଛନ୍ତି ?

ବିଗତ କେତେ ପୁରୁଷ / ପିଢ଼ିରୁ,	ପ୍ରଥମ ପିଢ଼ି	ଗତ କିଛି ବର୍ଷ

2. 2008 ରେ ଦଙ୍ଗା ସମୟରେ ଆପଣ କିଛି (ସମ୍ପତ୍ତି / ଜୀବନ) ହରାଇଛନ୍ତି କି?

- (କ) ହଁ (ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦିଷ୍ଟ କରନ୍ତୁ)
- (ଖ) ନା
- (ଗ) ଆଂଶିକ (ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦିଷ୍ଟ କରନ୍ତୁ)

3. ନିର୍ଯ୍ୟାତନା ସମୟରେ ଆପଣଙ୍କ ଆଶ୍ରୟ ଏବଂ ଖାଦ୍ୟ ପ୍ରତି କେହି ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କରିଥିଲେ କି?

- (କ) ସରକାର
- (ଖ) ଆଖପାଖରେ ମଣ୍ଡଳୀ ଗୁଡ଼ିକ
- (ଗ) ଏନ.ଜି.ଓ
- (ଘ) କେହି ନୁହେଁ

4. 2008 ଦଙ୍ଗା ପରେ ତୁମର ତୁମର ପୁନର୍ଥାପନ ପାଇଁ କେହି ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କରିଛନ୍ତି କି?

- (କ) ସରକାର

- (ଖ) ଆଖପାଖରେ ମଣ୍ଡଳୀ ଗୁଡ଼ିକ
- (ଗ) ଏନଜିଓ
- (ଘ) କେହି ନୁହେଁ

5. ଏପରି ଦଙ୍ଗାର ସାକ୍ଷୀ ହେବା ସତ୍ତ୍ୱେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଆପଣଙ୍କୁ ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟିୟ ବିଶ୍ୱାସରେ ରହିବାକୁ ଆପଣଙ୍କୁ କଣ

ଉତ୍ସାହିତ କରୁଛି?

- (କ) ଆମର ବିଶ୍ୱାସ ହେତୁ
- (ଖ) କାରଣ ଆମେ କିଛି ସାମଗ୍ରୀକ ସହାୟତା ଗ୍ରହଣ କରୁଛୁ
- (ଗ) ଆମର ପୃଷ୍ଠଭୂମି ହେତୁ (ପିତୃପୁରୁଷ)

6. ଦଙ୍ଗାର ପରବର୍ତ୍ତୀ ସମୟରେ ଆପଣ ଘରକୁ ଫେରିବା ପରେ ଆପଣ ମଣ୍ଡଳୀର ସହଭାଗୀତାରେ

ଯୋଗ ଦେଉଛନ୍ତି କି?

- (କ) ନିୟମିତ ଭାବେ
- (ଖ) ବେଳେ ବେଳେ
- (ଗ) ନା

7. ଦଙ୍ଗାର ପରବର୍ତ୍ତୀ ସମୟରେ ଆପଣ ମଣ୍ଡଳୀର ନେତାଙ୍କ ଭୂମିକାର ପ୍ରଭାବ ବିଷୟରେ ଆପଣଙ୍କ

ମତାମତ ?

ସନ୍ତୋଷଜନକ ନୁହେଁ	ସନ୍ତୋଷଜନକ	ଆଂଶିକ ସନ୍ତୋଷଜନକ	କହିପାରିବି ନାହିଁ

8. ଆପଣ ମଣ୍ଡଳୀରେ ନିଜ ଇଚ୍ଛାରେ ଏବଂ ସ୍ୱାଧୀନତା ସହିତ ସହଭାଗୀତା କରୁଛନ୍ତି କି?

ହଁ	ନା	କିଛି ସର୍ତ୍ତ ସହିତ

9. ଆପଣଙ୍କର ମଣ୍ଡଳୀର କୌଣସି ସଦସ୍ୟ ଏପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ମଣ୍ଡଳୀକୁ ଫେରିବା ପାଇଁ ଅଛନ୍ତି କି?

ହଁ	ନା	କେତେ

10. ଆପଣଙ୍କର ମଣ୍ଡଳୀର କୌଣସି ସଦସ୍ୟ / ସମ୍ପର୍କୀୟ ହିନ୍ଦୁ ଧର୍ମକୁ ଫେରି ଯାଇଛନ୍ତି କି?

ନାମ	ନା	ମହତ୍ତ୍ୱ ଦେଇପାରିବି ନାହିଁ

11. ଆପଣଙ୍କର ବିଶ୍ୱାସର ସ୍ୱାଧୀନତା ବିଷୟରେ ଆପଣଙ୍କର ମଣ୍ଡଳୀର ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନର ପରିସ୍ଥିତି କଣ?

ଭଲ	ସନ୍ଦେହଜନକ	ଭଲ ନୁହେଁ	କହିପାରିବି ନାହିଁ

12. ଆପଣଙ୍କର ହିନ୍ଦୁ ପତ୍ନୀଙ୍କ ଆପଣଙ୍କ ଉପରେ ପ୍ରତିକ୍ରିୟା କଣ?

ଆକର୍ଷକ	ସନ୍ଦେହଜନକ	ଭଲ ନୁହେଁ	କହିପାରିବି ନାହିଁ

13. ନିର୍ଯ୍ୟାତନା ପୂର୍ବରୁ ଏବଂ ପରେ ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଆପଣଙ୍କର ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିଗତ ଅଭିଜ୍ଞତା ବଦଳି

ବିଶ୍ଳେଷଣ କରନ୍ତୁ ?

F. Collection of Photos



**Shree Swamy Laxmanananda
Saraswati**



**Jalespata Temple where
Swamy Laxmanananda Saraswati**



Rioters during the riot in 2008



**Church that was demolished and
hoisted flag by Hindu fanatics**



A Christian Woman after having lost everything during the riot



Rioters hoisting BJP political Party flag during the riot as a sign of victory



Refugee Camp for Christians after the Riot



Demolished House during the Riot



Kandhamal Day to Day Life

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