

Violation of Human Rights of Minorities in Odisha with special reference to Christians in Kandhmal District

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ABSTRACT: *The issue of human rights violation of weaker sections of society is increasing day by day all over the world keeping their life at stake. In every sphere of life, in country after country, human rights are being violated. Each violation of human rights, wherever it occurs is a great threat to the welfare and dignity of the human civilization. One can say that the status of democracy of a country can be judged by the status of human rights of minorities, particularly the religious minorities and weaker sections of society. But the reverse picture we can find in Indian society. Religious minorities in India particularly Christians and Muslims, suffer religious persecution daily, despite nominal protection guaranteed under Indian constitution. Belying any constitutional claim of religious freedom, both federal and state legislation included anti-conversion laws which were very detrimental to the religious minorities. An attempt has been made in this paper to highlight on the theoretical aspect of human rights violation of Christians in Kandhmal District in Odisha. The paper concludes analyzing the failure of state government as well as of public officials in protecting the vulnerable minority Christian community along with some remedial measures.*

Keywords: *Human Rights, Kandhmal, Minority, Christians, Hindutva*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Post-World War history of national and international governance is predominantly marked by the concern of promoting for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction of any kind. The UN role in setting norms and standards (through human rights instruments in the last fifty years) and evolving procedures and mechanisms to secure the implementation of human rights is both historic and revolutionary. This process of internationalization and globalization of the concept of human rights has had great impact on the constitution making and nation-building process in India and other newly emerging states. Despite genuine efforts by national and international machinery, human rights message is not reaching to the vulnerable groups like Dalits, women, children, bonded laborers, tribals and minorities. The complex social norms and practices, besides political-legal compulsions, come in the way of ensuring human rights of all individuals (Vijapur and Kumar, 1999). The issue of human rights of minorities in India recently brings the attention of the academicians, policy makers, and the members of civil society owing to the increasing incidents of discrimination, torture, massacre, brutal killing and human rights violation of these groups almost in all parts of the country. According to Grover, the Nellei massacre of 1983; the anti-Sikh Pogroms of 1984; the Bhagalpur riots of 1989; the anti-Muslim violence in Mumbai in 1992; the genocide attacks on the Muslims of Gujarat in 2002; and the Kandhmal attack on Christians in 2008, indicates that mass crimes committed with overt or covert state sanctions, pose a grave challenge to the secular, pluralist idea of India (Grover, 2010: Preface). Mohapatra points out that minority rights encompasses several heterogeneous claims. Two types of claims are quite familiar. First a minority group demands rights against the larger society, to protect itself against the majoritarian tendencies of the society. In some cases a minority culture wants rights against its own members, who in the name of individual right can challenge certain collective practices. There are occasions in which a minority group wants autonomy as the best way of protecting their collective existence. In other circumstances they need special and exclusive provisions in order to survive as a community (Mohapatra, 2010:224).

The modern world is divided into nations and groups of different civilizations. There is no country in the world, where everyone speaks the same language, belongs to the same race and shares the same culture, beliefs and traditions. All the countries represent a mosaic, with a majority sharing a common history and cultural background and many smaller groups (minorities) each with its peculiar characteristics. It is very difficult to define the word 'minority'. According to Francisco Caportatis, [a] minority group is a [collectivity] numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a state, in a non-dominant position, whose members- being citizens of a state- possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language (Udogu, 2001). In this regard, a minority is a racial, tribal, linguistic, religious, caste or nationality

group within a nation state and which alone on its numerical strength cannot control the political machinery of the State.

The available literature in this regard primarily focuses on minorities and their rights, communal violence, minority identities (Fernades,1999; Seth and Mahajan, 1999; Wadhwa,1975; Weiner,1997; Singh, 1993; Krishna, 1985; Kapur,1987; Engineer,1984; Sakir,1983; Rajan,2002; and Tyagi, 2003) while very limited works have been done on violation of human rights of minorities (Singh, 2003; Das, 1992; Vijapur and Kumar,1997 and Chatterjee and Sheoran, 2007). In case of Odisha, except some public documents and Grover, 2010, Nayak, 2009, Puniyani, 2010, no such works on violation of human rights of minorities has been done. However, in this regard, an attempt has been made in this paper to highlight on how the Christian community are severely discriminated, assaulted, and killed on grounds of religion in Kandhmal district of Odisha.

II. VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS OF MINORITIES IN INDIA

India is a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic & republic state. Every attribute of the Republic is bed-rocked on human rights - the sovereignty of the people over the entire resources of the nation, the secular liberation which interdicts discrimination against individuals and groups on religious grounds, the socialist harvest of economic, cultural and other rights, and the democratic participation through political and civil rights. There are meaningfully implicit in the system of the Republic and made more explicit in the Preamble and Parts III & IV which have been called the conscience of the constitution. The core objective of the constitution from the socio-economic aspects of human rights is spelt out in Arts.38 and 39 of the constitution. The various constitutional amendments from the very first down to the last, show a determination of the Indian Parliament to transform the economic order & establish social justice through state action.

But, today, human rights violation is rampant through the world particularly in developing countries including India, in spite of adopting a number of declarations, conventions and covenants. Human rights violation is a term used, when a government or society or individual violates the rights of its citizens or its members or any human being. Government and officials violate rights of individuals especially refugees, victims of war, and persons under police or army custody. Women are subject to all types of discrimination and abuse. Children are discriminated, sexually abused and physically assaulted. The rights of Dalits and tribal people are refused. It is alleged that their properties are taken away and their women and girls are raped, assaulted and ill-treated. There are accusations that 'religious minority peoples' properties are damaged and places of worship are destroyed. They are assaulted, false cases are registered against them and they are discriminated by the religious majority (Kanmony, 2010: Preface).

ACHR report reveals the failure of the central government and state level authorities to address societal violence and discrimination faced by religious ethnic minorities, indigenous and tribal peoples and members of the Dalit community. The abuses include the failure of the state to address economic and social grievances. The government has regularly failed to provide adequate public security for these groups and failed to prevent non-state actors from taking the law into their own hands and allowed the space for armed opposition groups to proliferate. Dalits, Women and Children suffer different kinds of discrimination and exploitation. Atrocities on Dalit in the form of massacre, loot, rape, molestation, harassment, sudden eviction from land have become routine. Women are victimized in the form of rape, abduction and kidnapping, murder and dowry deaths. The children continue to remain in distress and turmoil (Ganesh, 2001:201-15).

Despite the constitutional guarantees the human rights in India are violated and sometimes suppressed by the state and police. *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)* has yet to be realized in real life in India. Exploitation of poor by rich, socio-economic and gender inequalities, acute poverty, violation of rights of the citizens enshrined in the constitution by the state and police, suppression of basic human rights of Dalits, Adivasis, Women, children and the minorities etc. become day to day affairs in Indian Society.

The Government of India has notified five communities namely Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists and Zoroastrians as Minorities for the purposes of National Commission of Minority Act, 1992. As per the 1991 Census minority groups constitute 145.3 millions (17.19) percent of the total population i.e. Hindus forms 81.56 percent, Muslim 12.58 percent, Christians 2.32 percent and Sikhs 1.94 percent of the Indian population. Besides them 0.77 percent are Buddhists and Zoroastrians are around one lakh in number (Singh, 2003:39). According to 2001 Census, 80.5% of the population of India practice Hinduism. Islam (13.4%), Christianity (2.3%), Sikhism (1.9%), Buddhism (0.8%), and Jainism (0.4%) are the other minor regions followed by the people of India (Census, 2011, GOI). This diverse religious belief systems in India today is the result of both the existence of multiple native religions and also, assimilation and social integration of religions brought to the region by the traders, travelers, immigrants, and even invaders and conquerors. Peoples Forum for UPR states that the religious minorities in India who constituted 18.6% of the total population as per 2001 Census face serious discrimination from majority Hindus and the state has turned distinctly majoritarian. The religious minorities face persecution, stigmatization, and marginalization in economic, social and political spheres. India having

born out of communal riots during the partition in 1947 continues to witness regular communal violence, mass crimes, ethnic cleansing and genocide (Peoples Forum forUPR, 2007:8).

To safeguard the secular character of India, Article 25 of the constitution of India guarantees the right to freedom of conscience and freedom to profess, practice and propagate any religion. But this right is subject to public order, morality and health & it does not allow any religion to convert people of other religions by means of force, fraud, allurements or inducement. In addition of article 27, article 29 & 30, articles 347,350,350(A) and 250(B) of the Indian constitution contain provisions relating to safeguards for the linguistic minorities.

The late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had in 1983 announced a 15 point programme for the welfare of minorities which included their overall development. Its objective was providing security to their life and property and special thrust in the area of education and public employment. In May, 1992, the *National Commission for Minority Act, 1992* was enacted giving it statutory status. It was further reconstituted in January, 2000 (Beittelle, 2009). Besides this, India is also a state party to major international treaties such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

Despite all such measures, the rights of the minorities are severely violated. So many examples can be cited in this regard. Anti-Christian violence, incited by religious extremists, has taken the form of killing of Christians and burning of churches in the tribal regions of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Kerala. The burning of Australian Missionary, *Graham Staines* and his two children in Orissa was one in the series of incidents of religious violence that have of late afflicted the Indian society (Peoples Forum for UPR in India, 2007:8). The Sachar committee report, when it came out in 2006, created a stir among advocates of social justice and minority rights. The report and the surveys conducted in its wake revealed continuing disparities between the Muslims and the rest of Indian society, particularly upper castes Hindus. In a country where social prejudice is widespread, not to say endemic, advocates of minority rights have found it natural to attribute the plight of Muslims to the practice of discrimination against them. It is, of course, difficult to demonstrate that those Muslims who have fallen behind in the competition for education and employment have been individually the victim of discrimination, or that prejudice was the sole reason why they fell behind (Singh, 2003:38).

In December, 1998, Gujarat witnessed increase in attacks on Christian minority and in March-April, 2002 attacks on the Muslim minority. About the attack on Christians it was held that Christian Missionaries were converting tribals to Christianity and non-Christian tribals clashed with tribal Christians at the behest of VHP. In this case, there was no loss of life but properties, school building and religious places of Christian were burnt & destroyed. In the latter case the violence was triggered off by the senseless and condemnable killing of Karsevaks (servants of God) on the Sabarmati Express at Godhra Junction by some local Muslims on 27 February, 2002. On 28 February, 2002, murder, arson and looting of Muslim dominated localities in Gujarat started. It was engineered by the Hindutva militant organization allegedly at the behest of the State Government and it continued in 20 districts out of 24 for three months. But on 24 September, 2002, nearly fifty people were killed in the famous Akshardham temple by Muslim terrorists who had allegiance with Islamic fundamentalists. They were on a larger game plan to avenge communal killings of Muslim in Gujarat (ibid.).

There is an argument by certain groups and individuals in favour of scrapping those constitutional provisions, which protect cultural and religious rights of minorities. However, the Supreme Court's stand that secularism is the basic feature of India's constitutional democracy, and thus, it can not be debated, is indeed, a very healthy sign. The government, to look into the grievances of the minorities, has instituted a minority commission. It is found that during communal riots, by and large, the life and properties of minorities are destroyed. Even the police and the Para-military forces have often exhibited their communal bias. *The Krishna Commission* in the Bombay riots of 1992 has found that the communal political groups play a role in organizing communal riots. Even controversial legislations like POTA and TADA have been vehemently criticized as draconian measures by the state for violating, in most cases, the human rights of the minority community. Demolition of Babri Masjid has brought a new language in the political discourse, which has different meanings (Satapathy, 2006:158).

The protection of human rights of minorities requires adjustments in the component of modern societies, which in other respects has been organized on the basis of formal institution. The rule of law and rationality, building social capital has been talked about by Francis Fukuyama to bring social harmony but social capital can not be so easily created or shaped by public policy. It requires change in the socialization, thought process and value system of the individual and community (Singh, 2003:41).

III. VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS OF CHRISTIANS IN KANDHAMAL DISTRICT

A. CHRISTIANITY IN ODISHA

Christianity in India is not an import by the European colonial powers. Christianity reached the shores of India much before the Europeans- in 1st century A.D., and has been one of the religions in India since then. Coastal

Orissa came in contact with Christianity missionaries towards the end of the 18th century when it became a maritime centre for European traders – English, French, Dutch, Danes and Portuguese. There is no statistical evidence of the rise in the conversion to Christianity in the last few decades. To the contrary, the Census indicates a steady decline in the Christian population: 2.60% in 1971, 2.44% in 1981, 2.32% in 1991, and 3.2% in 2001. In Kandhmal, Christianity is nearly one and a half century old. Baptist missionaries set up institutions in Kandhmal during the period 1859-1863. They were pioneers in setting up modern centres of education and health in Kandhmal. According to the Census report of 2001, the Christian population in Kandhmal district stands at 1, 17,950 (19.19%) of the total population of the district (Grover, 2010:30-31). Kandhmal has a history of more than 500 years of Christian missionary presence. From late nineteenth century, through the setting up of educational institutions both Catholic and Protestant mission groups started their work here. An example can be given of O.J. Millman, a Baptist Missionary who set up a school in 1914 at Gudripadi near G.Udayagiri. In the past, Christian missions have made significant contributions to uplift the tribals, downtrodden in the Kandhmal district and now they are doing so. Christian missions do stand for justice and Christian values and this is the reason that they have become targets of Hindu fundamentalism (Nayak, 2009).

B. SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF KANDHMAL

Odisha is one of the poorest states of India which is the melting pot of all religions. The different religions living in Odisha are Hinduism 94.35%, Christianity 2.24%, Islam 2.07%, and others 1.14%. Kandhmal is one of the poorest districts of Odisha. It stands 29th out of Odisha's 30 districts on the UNDP Human Development Index. According to the Orissa Development Report, 2004, Kandhmal has a per capita income of Rs. 4743 per annum as against the state average of Rs.5264. The Hindutva forces allege that, because of low per capita income, the tribals of Kandhmal district have become easy targets for missionaries. Kandhmal is located in the heart of Odisha. Present day Kandhmal was formed as a district in 1994 from the earlier Phulbani district. Kandhmal is divided into 12 blocks, namely Phulbani, Phirinhiya, Balliguda, K.Nuagaon, Tikabali, Chakapad, Khajuriapada, Thumudibandh, Daringbadi, Kotagarh, Raikia, and G.Udayagiri. It consists of about 2415 villages. Because of its hilly forested areas, it has poor connectivity with other districts. Only 12% of its area is cultivable. About 71% areas comprise of forests and the rest is barren land (NPT, 2010:11). According to 2001 Census, Kandhmal had a population of 6, 48,201. The Scheduled Tribes constituted 51.96% of the total population with 3, 36, 801 persons while the Scheduled Castes constituted 18.89% with 1, 09, 506 populations. The district is mainly dominated by Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste population. Scheduled Tribe population includes tribes like Kandha, Kutia Kandha, Kandhgouda, Kol and Soura and Scheduled Castes include mainly Panas (Rath, 2006).

The Christian community is economically disenfranchised in Kandhmal. A majority of the Christian population including local Christian leaders are landless or marginal landholders with an average holding of half an acre per family. Christian leaders assert that the Church does not convert under duress or offer money in lieu of conversions. In the 1960s and 1970s many Adivasis benefitted from the services of education, health care and employed provided by the Christian missionaries. The exposure to Christianity in the course of such access to services may have led some to convert their religion. Adivasis and Dalits are not religious, but ethnic groups. Adivasis are primarily animists and do not fall in the category of religion as a social phenomenon in the same way as Christians, Muslims and Hindus. However, the Sangh Parivar considers adivasis to be Hindus, and where they have adopted religions other than Hinduism, they have become targets for re-conversion. More than 90% of the dalits in Kandhmal, otherwise known as Panas, are Christians. The dalits are poorer than the adivasis and have no access to resources. However, Kandhas- the adivasi in Kandhmal- are also disenfranchised community. 78% of the adivasis in Kandhmal live below poverty line (NPT, 2010: *ibid.*)

The predicament of Panas however is no less than a matter of concern. An anomaly in the definition of Scheduled Castes in the Constitutional (Scheduled Caste) Order of 1950 issued by the President of India is that the Scheduled Castes who convert to religions other than Hinduism are no longer regarded among Scheduled Castes. Subsequent amendments to the Presidential Order have permitted conversion to Buddhism and Sikhism without a loss of SC status, but not conversion to Christianity or Islam. As a result, a Scheduled Caste person loses his/her SC status upon conversion to Christianity. Conversely, Scheduled Tribes have rights to land and reservations that they do not lose upon conversion to any religion. The 1950 Order has caused many Christian Panas to lose their rights to reservations and other benefits that they were entitled to as SCs. It is in this context that allegations are made against the Panas, of using the fake certificates to avail of SC benefits despite conversion to Christianity. While the Sangh Parivar claim the demand for reservations benefits by converted Panas to be the root of the problem, the fact that both, dalit and adivasi Christians have been at the receiving end of the violence exposes of the hollow nature of their claim (*ibid.*: 12).

Socio- culturally, there is a tradition of friendly interaction in Kandhmal among people across boundaries- Hindus and Christians, adivasis and dalits. Both, adivasis and dalits speak the same Kui language and despite the politicization and subsequent construction of oppositional identities, there are inter-marriages among tribal Kandhas and dalit Kandhas. Hindus and Christians have also lived side by side and for many of them, it is the

outside Oriyas (namely caste Hindus, some of who are members of Sangh Parivar) who have instigated conflicts between adivasis and dalits or Hindus and Christians, so that their continued exploitation of local resources and domination of local politics and economy remains unchallenged. In Hinduising the Kandha adivasis and polarizing the relations between them and the Pana dalit Christians, the Sangh Parivar engineered rivalries between these two communities (ibid.)

C. ATROCITIES AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

The Indian Constitution provides religious freedom to both individuals and association of individuals. Article 25(1) of the Indian constitution states, "subject to public order, morality and health and to the other provisions of this part, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion." Along with this, Article 15(1) also points out that "the state shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them. This applies to every persons including the Christian. Here the question arises why did Odisha government enact anti-conversion law in 1967?

Orissa was the first state to enact anti-conversion law when Rajendra Narayan Singh Deo was the Chief Minister and later some of the other states. Madhya Pradesh (1968), Arunachal Pradesh (1978), Gujarat (2003), Rajasthan (2005), Himachal Pradesh (2006) and Tamil Nadu (2004) followed the footsteps of Orissa. This enactment of anti-conversion law in different states is purely violation of right to freedom of religion. Hindutva forces strongly oppose conversion from one religion to the other but historically, Hinduism which has given birth to Hindutva was a conversionist religion.

D. VIOLENCE IN KANDHMAL, DECEMBER 2007

The violence in Kandhmal in December 2007 was mainly by Hindu nationalists targeting Christian minority community in Odisha.

On December 2007, Hindutva afflicted adivasi organizations organized a march, reportedly supported by Hindu communalist groups, rallying "Stop Christianity. Kill Christians." On 24 December, communal tension erupted in Brahmanigaon, where a structure set up to a Christian celebration was attacked and destroyed. The provocation was nothing more than a pandal (a temporary bamboo structure) encroaching the main road of the town. Attackers from different Sangh Parivar groups attacked Christians with guns, swords, iron rods and other lethal weapons, just 400 yards from a police station in Brahmanigaon. 2 Christians were injured while many others ran away to the forests leaving behind their belongings. A rumor of attack on the VHP leader Laxmananda Saraswati spread like wildfire in the area, leading to increased tension of communal violence (ibid.)

On 25 December 2007, seven churches- Catholic, Protestant, Pentecostal and independent- were torched in Barakhama village, in west Kandhmal/Phulbani district, central Orissa. On the same day churches and houses of Christians were attacked, ransacked and burnt in areas including Pobingin, Bodagan, Kamapada, Kulpakia, Phiringia, Srasananda, Ruthungia, Kalingia, Tikabali, Nuagaon, Dalagaon and Iripiguda. Between 24 and 26 December 2007, a total of 5 parish churches, 48 village churches, 5 convents, 4 presbyteries, 7 hostels, 1 vocational training centre and 1 leprosy centre were burnt and destroyed. Over 500 houses were burnt, looted and destroyed, 126 shops/other properties were destroyed. Several were killed and injured (ibid: 13).

E. SWAMI LAXMANANDA'S MURDER

24th August marked the beginning of gruesome violence against dalit and adivasi Christians in Kandhmal owing the murder of Swami Laxmananda. On the evening of Saturday, 23 August 2008, Swami Laxmanananda was killed at his ashram in Jalaspatha in Kandhmal district, along with four others including three fellow leaders of the VHP. The Swami had lodged an FIR 48 hours prior to the attack, seeking adequate security arrangements, based on letters of threat to his life. The attackers estimated at thirty gunmen, were suspected Maoist insurgents based on the attack and a letter found at the ashram.

The attacks on the Christians in Kandhmal district was the single largest attack on any religious group in the world in 2008. According to the All India Christianity Council (AICC), at least 118 persons, mostly Christian tribals and dalits died in the attacks (AICC, 2008).

On 1 December 2008, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik stated in the state Assembly that 4215 houses were either damaged or burnt and at least 252 churches/prayer halls were damaged following the killing of Swami Laxmananda Saraswati. He also stated that about 10,000 people have been named in 746 cases registered in Kandhmal violence and 598 accused have been arrested (The Statesman, 2008).

One of the rape victims was a 28 year old Catholic nun who was publicly raped in front of the armed policemen at K.Nuagaon, 12km.from Baliguda subdivision in Kandhmal district. Father Thomas Chellan, a priest, was also dragged out and badly beaten when he tried to save the nun (The Hindu, 2008).

Over 30,000 Christians fled from their homes. But only 14,500 of them took shelter in the government relief camps. The rest were hiding in the forest due to fear of attacks. The government relief camps were not safe. On

3 September 2008, over 2000 armed persons attacked the government High School relief camp in the Tikabali block which housed about 800 Christians (The Tribune, 2008). Those who have returned have faced forcible conversion by Hindu fundamentalists (The Asian Age, 2008).

On 2 October 2008 alone, as many as 22 Christian families of Ladapadar village under Phiringia block of Kandhmal district reportedly 'converted' to Hinduism. The conversion ceremony was allegedly conducted in the forest adjacent to Ladapadar by some local representatives of the VHP and Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS) [The Hindu, 2008].

The Kandhmal violence had a severe impact on the life of the Christians like killing and physical violence, psychological violence, burning of residential premises, looting and destruction of moveable properties, destruction of and damage to places of worship, destruction of damage to other institutions and forced conversion, violence against women, housing, livelihood and financial insecurity, internal displacement, violence on children and adolescents, impact on education, impact on socio-economic and cultural rights etc. In this regard, the state government failed in its responsibility to prevent the violence and the public officials also failed to take action against the perpetrator, thereby making the victim-survivors vulnerable to intimidation and threats from them. Kanungo in this context, points out that the anti-Christian violence in Orissa, orchestrated by the Visva Hindu Parishad and its allies, has unleashed the fury of Hindu Kandhas against dalit Pana Christians. The Hindutva organizations, engaged in converting tribals to Hinduism, accuse Christian missionaries of 'forcing' the dalits to convert (Kanungo, 2008).

However, from the above incidents it is quite obvious that the basic human rights of Christians in Kandhmal district are violated. Religion should not be blamed for the violence rather extremism of any fundamental attitude should be criticized. Education is the basic right of child but the children belong to Kandhmal district missed class 10th examination and many students have been unable to attend the school due to violence. In the same way every person is free to profess and practice their religion according to the Indian constitution but Christians in Odisha are denied this opportunity due to Anti-Conversion Act which is unconstitutional.

IV. CONCLUSION

Odisha has had a horrific history of violence against the Christian community, which increased in intensity and scale with the spread of communal forces in the state. The carnage in Kandhmal is an act of communalism directed mainly against the Christianity, a vast majority of who are dalit Christians and adivasis and against those who supported or worked with the community. Members of Hindutva organizations including the Baj Rang Dal, Visva Hindu Parishad (VHP), Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) were identified as perpetrators. Communal forces have used religious conversion as an issue for political mobilization and incited horrific forms of violence and discrimination against the Christian of Scheduled Caste origin and their supporters in Kandhmal. The targeted violence against the minority Christian community violated the fundamental right to life, liberty and equality guaranteed by the Indian constitution and affirmed by ICCPR, ICESCR and other international covenants. However, in the light of above facts, I would like to suggest some remedial measures against such barbaric atrocities and human rights violation of Christians in Kandhmal district:

- The right of an individual to change one's faith should be protected as a fundamental right and the state should take steps where necessary to effectively protect and promote the safety, dignity and privacy of persons who change their faith voluntarily.
- The state agencies should promptly register, investigate and prosecute persons who initiate and conduct forcible conversions against minorities.
- India should end the culture of impunity that exists in religion-based targeted violence.
- Free legal should be provided to victims-survivors of such violence and they should be protected from intimidation.
- India should implement existing provisions in the law to prevent acts of religious hatred, incitement to religious violence and political exploitation of religion-based distinctions.
- The First Information Reports (FIRs) of victims of violence should be properly registered, regardless of religion or caste status.
- The state should provide appropriate redress to victims and humanitarian aid to those displaced by the violence.
- The state should establish an independent enquiry into the events to establish responsibility and take steps to prevent any further politicization of communal tensions.
- The state government should discharge its duty in a diligent and non-discriminatory manner.
- The state should make compensation for loss of life, injury and property and arrange relief camps with food, clothing, tents, lighting etc. for as many days as required by the victims.
- Construction assistance should be provided by the state government for damage of public institutions like school, clinic, hostel, hospital etc.

- Christian missions need to avoid certain methods that provoke Hindutva forces to advance attacks on Christianity community.
- Above all, the protection of minority rights particularly of Christians in Odisha needs a response state along with a vigilant civil society.

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