



# Christian Proselytization in Punjab: Analyzing the Expansion Strategies of Evangelisation

R.Trivedi

Department of Comparative Religion and Philosophy, Demos Foundation Center For Research In Humanities,  
Shankarrao Kirloskar Marg, Erandwane, Pune.

## Abstract :

This research paper examines the expansion of Christian missionary activities from Tamil Nadu to Punjab, analyzing their impact on the socio-cultural and religious fabric of the region. It investigates the methods employed by missionaries, including social services, drug rehabilitation programs, and migration incentives, as tools for conversion. The study also explores the resistance from Hindu and Sikh communities and the broader implications of these activities on Punjab's identity. Punjabisation, in the context of religious conversion, refers to the increasing Christian evangelization in Punjab, led by pastors and fueled by digital outreach. Various missionary groups employ aggressive strategies, the role of popular pastors such as Bajinder Singh, Ankur Narula, Raman Hans, and Vishali Hans, who have played a significant role in the rise of Christianity in Punjab through mass healing prayers and evangelical outreach programs. These pastors use large gatherings and digital platforms to attract followers, promising miracles and faith-based solutions to personal and societal issues, including drug addiction and economic hardships. The growing influence of these religious leaders has led to debates over religious freedom versus coercive conversions. The paper concludes by suggesting measures to ensure that religious activities are conducted ethically and without exploitation of vulnerable communities.

**Keywords:** Conversion, drug rehabilitation, migration incentives, Sikhism, Hinduism, healing prayer, urban model of evangelisation. Punjabisation, Digital evangelism.

**Introduction:** The history of Christian missionary activities in India is ancient, continuing from the colonial period to modern times. Initially, South India, particularly Kerala and Tamil Nadu, were the primary hub for missionary activities. However, in recent years, missionary efforts have expanded to northern states remarkably Punjab. This state, historically a stronghold of Sikhism and Hinduism, is undergoing a profound religious and social transformation due to the increasing influence of Christian missionary activities. The pastoral strategies employed by Christian missionaries are not only reshaping the religious landscape but also affecting the social fabric of the state. While some view these activities as a form of spiritual revival, others perceive them as a challenge to the cultural and religious identity of Punjab<sup>4</sup>.

The pastoral activities in Punjab have also led to significant social tensions. Sikh and Hindu communities, which have historically coexisted despite religious differences, are now witnessing separation or divisions<sup>3</sup>. Many Sikh leaders have openly expressed concern over the rapid rise of Christian conversions, viewing it as an organized attempt to dilute Sikh identity. Similarly, Hindu organizations have been running awareness campaigns to prevent conversions, arguing that they threaten the traditional cultural ethos of Punjab.

**Historical Perspective of Christian Missionaries in India:** Christianity has been propagated in India for centuries, but during the colonial period, missionary activities became more organized. The arrival of Portuguese missionaries in the 16th century led to the spread of Christianity in Goa and South India. During British rule, missionaries gained more freedom, accelerating conversion campaigns under the pretext of education, medical services, and social reform. Kerala and Tamil Nadu has been a traditional stronghold of Christian missionaries. Various church organizations have established schools, hospitals, and other institutions to facilitate conversions. Dalits and tribal communities were particularly targeted. Large-scale conversions took place under the guise of education and social welfare, leading to opposition from Hindu organizations and the local populace (Gordon, A., 1886). Now after north-east, this activities spreading in Punjab.

**Rise of Christian Missionaries in Punjab:** In recent years, Christian missionary activities have significantly increased in Punjab. Despite the deep religious faith of Sikh and Hindu communities, missionaries have successfully adapted their strategies to convert individuals through social services. Punjab's issues, such as increasing drug addiction, economic disparity, and the social status of Dalit communities, have made these groups more susceptible to missionary influence (Kaur, K. 2020). The influence of pastors such as Bajinder Singh, Ankur Narula, Raman Hans, and Vishali Hans has grown significantly. These evangelical leaders have successfully mobilized thousands of followers by conducting healing prayers, faith-based gatherings, and using digital media to spread their message. Their ministries focus on miraculous healings, financial prosperity, and deliverance from addictions, making them particularly appealing to vulnerable populations, including drug addicts and the economically disadvantaged<sup>1</sup>.

These pastors operate large-scale churches where congregants gather in thousands to witness faith healings and seek divine intervention in their personal struggles. The narrative of transformation—from poverty and addiction to spiritual fulfillment and economic stability—is a key aspect of their missionary outreach. The promise of healing and financial success makes many people turn to Christianity, often leading to mass conversions. In recent years, a distinctive trend has emerged within Christian evangelical efforts in the Punjab region, often referred to as "Punjabisation." This approach involves integrating elements of Punjabi culture into Christian worship and outreach activities, creating a unique blend that resonates deeply with the local populace. By incorporating traditional Punjabi music styles, dance forms, and linguistic nuances, these initiatives aim to make the message of Christianity more accessible and relatable to Punjabi communities.

**Modus operandi for Evangelism and loss of Indigenous Identity:** One of the most concerning aspects of missionary influence is the use of social vulnerabilities to encourage conversions<sup>3</sup>. Many missionaries target individuals suffering from economic hardships, drug addiction, and a lack of social mobility. Punjab has been grappling with a severe drug crisis, which has devastated thousands of families, especially among the youth. Missionaries often step in as social reformers, providing rehabilitation services, counselling, and financial aid to victims. While these efforts seem noble on the surface, but they serve as an entry point for religious conversion (Trivedi, R. 2025). The promise of a fresh start and a clean life often comes with an invitation to embrace Christianity.

Another critical factor is the use of foreign visas and migration opportunities as a conversion tool. Many individuals in Punjab aspire to move abroad, especially to Western countries like

Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom, where there is a significant Punjabi diaspora. Some Christian organizations exploit this aspiration by offering migration assistance, scholarships, and job opportunities to those who convert. The allure of a better life abroad makes many individuals, particularly from economically weaker backgrounds, susceptible to religious conversion (Voss; R. Michelle, 2021).

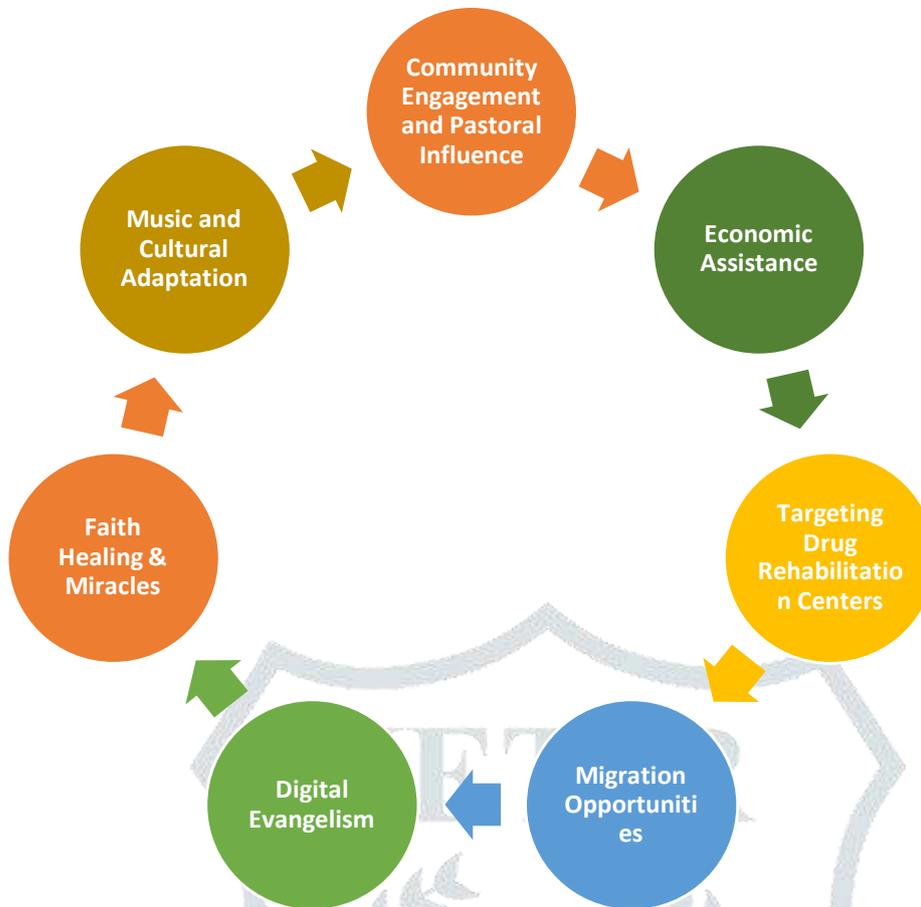
Moreover, the rapid expansion of Pentecostal Christianity in Punjab has introduced a new wave of religious fervour, often characterized by mass gatherings, healing sessions, and miracle-based evangelism<sup>1</sup>. These events draw large crowds, including those from Sikh and Hindu backgrounds, leading to further concerns about religious shifts in the region. Critics argue that these healing sessions often exploit people's desperation, particularly those suffering from terminal illnesses, disabilities, or chronic ailments.

The media, including YouTube and other digital platforms, has played a crucial role in amplifying the reach of these pastoral activities. Many Punjabi Christian pastors have gained a significant following online, broadcasting their sermons, testimonials, and healing sessions to a global audience (Trivedi, R. 2025). This digital evangelism has further facilitated conversions by making missionary teachings accessible to a wider audience<sup>2,4</sup>.

The increasing activities of Christian missionaries in Punjab, particularly their use of social vulnerabilities, drug rehabilitation programs, and migration opportunities, have significant religious and social implications. The transformation of Punjab's religious landscape is a complex issue, involving both individual agency and larger socio-economic factors (Dangal, Philip, 2018). To preserve the region's cultural and religious heritage, a balanced approach is needed—one that ensures religious freedom while preventing exploitative conversion practices.

Digital evangelism has further strengthened the reach of these missionaries. Social media platforms like YouTube and Facebook are flooded with testimonials of people claiming to have been healed or financially uplifted through faith in Christianity. This digital push has made missionary efforts more accessible, allowing them to reach individuals beyond Punjab and into the global diaspora.

**Missionary Strategies in Punjab** : Christian missionaries in Punjab employ various strategies to expand their influence:



**Fig.-1: Missionary Strategies in Punjab**

1. **Community Engagement and Pastoral Influence:** Organizing large-scale healing events and social gatherings. Local pastors play a key role in grassroots evangelization, offering faith-healing sessions, baptisms, and personal counseling.
2. **Economic Assistance:** Providing financial help and employment opportunities. Many missionaries provide education, healthcare, and financial aid, particularly in rural areas where government services are inadequate.
3. **Targeting Drug Rehabilitation Centers:** Assisting addicts and using recovery programs as a means to encourage conversions.
4. **Migration Opportunities:** Offering help with visas and foreign job placements for converts.
5. **Digital Evangelism:** Utilizing YouTube, television, and social media for religious outreach. Social media platforms, YouTube sermons, and WhatsApp-based outreach have become significant tools for spreading Christian teachings, often targeting youth and marginalized communities.
6. **Faith Healing & Miracles:** Public gatherings often focus on miraculous healing, attracting individuals facing health and economic crises.
7. **Music and Cultural Adaptation:** Christian worship in Punjabi-style hymns and music creates an emotional connection with local traditions, making conversion more appealing by using Punjabi cultural expressions such as bhangra, Gurbani-inspired hymns, and traditional bhajans.

These strategies have significantly impacted Punjab's religious and social fabric, leading to growing concerns among Sikh and Hindu communities. The situation demands a critical examination of religious freedoms and the protection of indigenous traditions.

**Response of Hindu and Sikh Organizations in Punjab is also noticeable:** Hindu and Sikh organizations in Punjab have expressed concern over missionary activities. Several religious and social groups are running awareness campaigns against conversions. Local communities are resisting missionary efforts and urging the government to intervene in this issue. In response to these developments, several Hindu and Sikh organizations have intensified their efforts to counter missionary influence (Tempest, R., 1985). Awareness campaigns, educational programs, and legal petitions have been launched to regulate missionary activities and prevent forced conversions. Additionally, some groups advocate for stricter government policies to monitor foreign funding for missionary organizations. This growing movement has not been without opposition. Hindu and Sikh organizations have raised concerns about the aggressive nature of these conversion tactics, arguing that they undermine traditional faiths and exploit societal vulnerabilities<sup>1</sup>. Community leaders have also called for stricter regulations on foreign funding that supports these missionary efforts, fearing that unchecked religious influence could destabilize Punjab's cultural and religious landscape.

**Conclusion:** The increasing activities of Christian missionaries in Punjab after Tamil Nadu have significant social and religious implications. To curb religious conversions, local communities and organizations must remain vigilant. The government should also formulate strict policies to regulate missionary activities and prevent forced conversions. The expansion of Christian missionary activities in Punjab represents a significant shift in the state's religious landscape. By leveraging social vulnerabilities, economic hardships, and migration opportunities, missionaries have successfully facilitated large-scale conversions. The use of drug rehabilitation centers as conversion hubs is particularly concerning, as it exploits the struggles of Punjab's youth. Similarly, the promise of foreign visas has made many individuals susceptible to religious shifts driven by economic aspirations rather than genuine faith.

The increasing prominence of pastors like Bajinder Singh, Ankur Narula, Raman Hans, and Vishali Hans has further accelerated the missionary movement in Punjab. Their healing prayers, prosperity gospel messages, and digital evangelism have created a strong pull for conversion, particularly among the vulnerable sections of society. These developments have led to growing resistance from Sikh and Hindu organizations, highlighting deep-seated concerns over the preservation of Punjab's religious identity.

While religious freedom is a fundamental right, there is an urgent need to ensure that conversion practices remain ethical and free from coercion. Government policies should focus on monitoring foreign funding, regulating missionary activities, and strengthening local cultural awareness programs to counter forced or deceptive conversions.

Ultimately, the situation in Punjab underscores the delicate balance between religious propagation and cultural preservation. It is essential to create an environment where faith-based activities contribute positively to society without undermining the indigenous traditions of the region. Only through awareness, dialogue, and policy reforms can Punjab navigate this religious transformation while maintaining its unique cultural and spiritual heritage.

**Footnotes:**

1. <https://swarajyamag.com/politics/harvesting-souls-in-punjab-how-the-evangelical-ecosystem-targets-sikhs>
2. <https://asiasamachar.com/2021/11/26/41493/>
3. <https://www.thesikhounge.com/post/the-rise-of-christian-conversion-in-punjab-majha-area>
4. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LENzKn9U0RM>
5. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fCmjyFdiLpo>

**Reference:**

1. Dangal, Philip (2018). "Understanding the Worldview of Hinduism for Evangelism Purposes," <https://dspace.um.edu.mx/handle/20.500.11972/1099>
2. Gordon, A. (1886). *Our India mission, 1855-1885: A thirty years' history of the Indian mission of the United Presbyterian Church of North America*. Philadelphia, Inquirer Printing Company, Lancaster, PA.
3. Sharma, A. (2005). Christian proselytization: A Hindu perspective. *Missiology: An international review*, vol 33 no. 4, 2005, pp.425-434.
4. Kaur, K. (2020). Searching for a new identity. Christianity, conversion and Dalit Sikhs. *Cultural and religious studies*. July 2020, Vol 8 No. 7, pp416-428.
5. Tempest, R. (1985). Sikhs dominate Punjab: Hindus: A forgotten minority. *Los Angeles Times*, July 31, 1985.
6. Voss, Roberts Michelle (2021). "A Theology of Hindu–Christian Relations." In *The Routledge Handbook of Hindu–Christian Relations*, edited by Chad M. Bauman and Michelle Voss Roberts, 1st ed., 345–54. Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2021.: Routledge, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003139843-35>.
7. Trivedi, R(2025). A Christian Mission: Urban Model for Ideological Propagation & Market-Driven Evangelism, JRHSS, Volume 13 ~ Issue 2 (2025) pp: 52-58. <https://www.questjournals.org/jrhss/papers/vol13-issue2/13025258.pdf>