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## Caste Discrimination on Dindigul Diocese – A Study

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### ABSTRACT

Dalits who converted to Christianity did not escape the caste system. The study analysed the present scenario of Dalit Christians in Dindigul Diocese. The main objective of the study is identifying the social – culture status of Dalit Christians in Dindigul diocese and to suggest a suitable action plan for their sustainable development. In the present study data have collected from both ‘primary’ as well as ‘secondary’ sources. The primary data were collected constituted of the respondent of all age groups and the interview method was used for data collection. The total sample consist of 20 respondents were selected by using simple random sampling technique. The researcher selected 20 villages in Dindigul Diocese. The collected data were analysed by using descriptive and simple percentage. Thus the study revealed that, to get a better understanding of the social and culture statues of Dalit Christain in Dindigul Diocese.

**KEYWORDS:** Dalits Christians, Discrimination, Social, Cultural and Diocese

### INTRODUCTION

Dalits who converted to Christianity did not escape the caste system which has a strongly ingrained presence in Indian society that is not limited to Hindu religious ideals. The different branches of Christianity in India still engage in these societal practices with regards to the caste system, along with all its customs and norms. The Roman Catholic Church treated the caste system as part of the Indian social structure.

In the Catholic Church, the Dalits Christians form the majority, almost 70 percent: but it is the upper caste-people, only 30 percent of church population, who control the Church by pre-empting the key position. The majority of the catholic bishops and clergy, the religious and lay leaders, come from the higher caste. One can say that this 30 percent, the upper caste, occupy the 90 percent of the administration and leadership of the church. The untouchability is practicing among Christians within the Church, cemetery, festivals, and marriage alliances, etc. The caste

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Christians are following caste system with the support of their own caste people, Priest, and nuns. That is the main reason for caste practice continuing in the Church.

**Dindigul Diocese:** Pope John Paul II erected the new Diocese of Dindigul on Nov. 10, 2003, carving it out of the Diocese of Tiruchirapalli. Dindigul the 17<sup>th</sup> diocese in Tamil Nadu, consists of 46 parishes. Among them 31 parishes were originally from Tiruchirapalli, 6 parishes were carved out of Madurai archdiocese and nine new parishes have been set up in the new diocese between the years 2004-2016. The geographical area of the diocese is almost co-extensive with the civil administrative area of Dindigul District in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu.

The total population in the diocesan area was 1,74,503 as of the end of 2010. Tamils form the majority ethnic group here. Tamil and English are the languages used. The diocesan territory stretches over a land area of 6,267 square kilometers and covers the civil district of Dindigul. Dindigul and Palani are the largest towns in the diocese. The literacy rate here is 69.35 percent.

Dindigul diocese has many educational and religious institutions. There are 6 Professional Colleges, 13 Higher Secondary Schools, 13 High Schools, 10 Middle Schools, 47 Primary Schools, 2 Training Centres, 2 Vocational Training Centres, 1 College, and 8 Ecclesiastical Institutions. It has religious and diocese Priest, their population are 49 and 65 respectively. There are 46 Parishes in Dindigul diocese. It has public service organisation in the name of Home/Orphanages, Dispensaries Hospitals and Social Service Centres their total numbers are 18, 6, 3 and 3 respectively.

### ***Statement of the problem:***

- Dalits Christians to continue to live in the same segregated places.
- Dalits Christians are separations or exclusion viz. in the church, in the funeral paths and graveyards, in the Church festivals, etc., and
- The lower caste Christians are considered as polluted, who are treated as untouchables by higher caste.

### ***Objectives:***

- ✓ To find out social status of Dalits and Non Dalits Christians
- ✓ To discover cultural status of low and High caste Christians

### ***Area of Study:***

The research was conducted following places in Dindiglu Diocese such as A. Vellodu, Anandarayankottai, Ariyanellure, Assisi Nagar, Athoor, East Marianathapuram, Guzliamparai, Irendalaiparai, K Avarampatty, Kamalapuram, Kosavapatty, Kuttathupatty, Mangarai Ammapatty, Marambady, Maravapatty, N Panjampatty, Palani, Ramayanpatty, Sirunayakkanpatty and Vannampatty.

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### METHODOLOGY

Survey method was used for the present study. The researcher collected data from 20 respondents by using simple random sample techniques on DCLM members, youth and lay people in Dindigul Diocese. The researcher used simple percentage analysis for the study.

<i>Table: 1</i>					
S. No	Total no. of villages	Separate Burial ground			
		Yes	%	No	%
1	20	20	100	0	0
<i>Table: 2</i>					
S. No	Total no. of villages	Separate place for living			
		Yes	%	No	%
1	20	20	100	0	0
<i>Table: 3</i>					
S. No	Total no. of villages	Separate church			
		Yes	%	No	%
1	20	20	100	0	0
<i>Table: 4</i>					
S. No	Total no. of villages	Separate festivals			
		Yes	%	No	%
1	20	20	100	0	0

Table 1 indicates that 20 (100 per cent) of the respondents are accepting separate burial ground for Dalits and Non Dalits Christians.

Table 2 displays that 20 (100 per cent) of respondents Agreed Dalits and non Dalit Christians are living Separate place.

The above Table 3 shows that there are 20 (100 per cent) sample respondents accepting Separate church for low caste Christians and upper Caste Christians.

The table 4 reveals that (20) 100 per cent of the respondents have agreed Separate festivals for low caste and high caste Christians.

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### ***Social Status (Statement of the respondents)***

We do not achieve the goals without ambition. Most of the Dalit Christians do not prepare themselves for the personal goals, targets etc. The large number of lower cost Christians is living in below poverty line because they are doing menial jobs and daily coolies. They are depending on high caste Christians for job and they are paid with very low. Dalit Christians are always lives simple life or normal life due to their poor economic conditions. They do not plan richest life or modern life and the live on causal life. Majority of Dalits are living in small houses and highly satisfied with what they have. Dalit Christians have faith in the Christianity; they are following the priest and nuns words like Holy Bible. They are unfortunately felt in Christianity but a Christian religion is not given freedom for Dalit Christians. Once upon a time the scheduled caste people have converted to Christianity for their social protection, food and welfare facilities. But now a day they are facing caste problem in Christianity. The non Dalit Christians are dominating the church and society. Hence, Dalit Christians are facing caste problem on every minutes and every day. For example Dalit Christians are living out of village or corner of village, separate burial ground, separate festival for Dalit and non Dalits. Most of non Dalit Christians are administrating Christian institutions and church etc., They deny employment opportunities for Dalit Christians.

The Christianity is spread out all over the world, the second biggest minority religions in India. Dalit Christians are largest members in church. The majority of Christians belong from Dalit community but caste system have been playing vital role in Christian religion. It is burden of Dalit Christians development. Dalit Christians priest, nuns, lay people do not get the opportunity to occupy powerful post in Christian institutions. Even Dalit Christians lives a richest life, the non Dalit do not treat them equally reason for the Indian caste system is deep rooted in our societies. The caste structure mixed with air in India. The high caste people are deeply breathing the air. It is a spirit of their body. It leads towards increasing the caste thought and implements it in their day to day life. Therefore they never treat Dalit Christians equally in India.

### ***Educational Status (Statement of the respondents)***

Education is powerful of knowledge. The Christian Institutions runs many Schools, Colleges, Universities and Vocational Training Centers in India. The ultimate purpose of this institution is providing education to all. If the educational institutions provide education to Dalits, there is no chance for Dalits to go for menial jobs. Christian's educational institutions failed to enhance Dalits educational qualification, knowledge, skills, ability, etc. They are improving talent and skills of their own community people. Even traditional skills are transform to Dalits, who is aware on skills they well settle in their life. The Christian matriculation schools neglected Dalits Christians students admission. By cause the administration felt that they are poor and unable to pay fees, excepting fee concession from management, the school administration must conducting special class for that student's, it is extra risk for school development. The same strategy is followed by the all Christian school for avoiding Dalits Christian student admission. The church

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institution management is mistreatment the Dalits Christians. Example: The teachers publically announce or calls the student by their caste name, do not give them willing subject after 10<sup>th</sup> standard. Do not concentrate on Dalits student developmental activities. Among the teachers also caste plays a importance role. The caste politics arises between Dalits and non Dalits teaching and non teaching staffs in the schools. This activity is absorbed by the students and same is reflected among the classmates. Unfortunately students are learning caste structure through teachers behaviour and school administration policy. The caste hierarchy is prevalent in all places, then how educational institution escapes from caste system? We must reduce caste discrimination, it is possible only when educational institution teaches the students about humanity and social development perspective. The Indian education system was framed by British Government. That period it was gave and made great Philosopher, Social reformer, Poetries, Lawyer and Doctors from Dalits community. Now the caste system is planning to shutdown the Dalits opportunity.

### ***Employment Status (Statement of the respondents)***

The church failed to distribute employment, especially Administration post for Dalit and non Dalits Christians. Dalits are doing coolie, agriculture allied activities and menial jobs. Most of Dalits Christians are landless. Most of non Dalits have been land lord and fully utilize church employment related opportunities. The church administration gives daily wages work for Dalits which is not permanent jobs. But the same church is gives management and white colour jobs for upper cast. The church controlled by the high caste people. Hence upper caste people only highly benefits compare then low caste people. The church do not have plan to create new employment for Dalits even do not focus to enhance Socio - economic status of Dalits towards arranging alternative jobs. Dalit Christians believe the priest nuns and social leaders but they misuse their faith. The church was full and full dominated by high cast people towards administration. Dalit Christian fights for their rights until, the church not listen to their demands. The caste system blocks helping minds, equality, fraternity, and human dignity.

### ***Political Status (Statement of the respondents)***

The caste hierarchy scattered Dalits in India. They are stiff to reform the society members or organize different schedule caste. The caste system is well planned to divide the society members. The society members are felt in caste system. They do not get victory in the present scenario of caste. The different scheduled caste leaders have been started their own political parties in India. Their ultimate aim is to eradicate caste system and reduce the caste discrimination. The political leader feels risk in organizing one common team or unique political parties for Dalits development. They said to appreciate each caste and have own political parties for a particular caste development. But, they do not plan to concentrate on others caste development perspective. The Dalits political leaders are well known about the caste politics system in India and although they join with dominate high caste parties. They again voluntarily felt the caste structure. The high caste political leaders feel that if Dalits gets political power in

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India, We must lose the caste identity and rule powers. The church is not concentrating the development of Dalits Christians political parties.

The church do not provides the political awareness among the members. Basically most of the Christians people unaware about the political statuses in India even if few people known they become voice less. The failure of Christianity education is that it does not give awareness for Dalits Christians. When Dalits Christians are getting political power in India, they easily solve the Dalits Christians common issues and caste problems. The Indian government denied Dalits Christians civil rights because voice less, forceless, unity less and not having good political parties in Dalits community. Therefore the church and social reformer should start new political parties for Dalits Christians developments.

### ***Suggestion***

- Casteism in the Church is affects Dalits Christians civil or social rights even violates our human dignity and basic natural equality. Therefore should control caste practice in the Church.
- The church administration should take action against the casteism in the Church and the consequent discriminations and deprivation of Dalit Christians.
- The Indian Church authorities should immediately ban all forms of divisions and separations or exclusion viz. in the church, in the funeral paths and graveyards, in the Church festivals, etc.
- Dalits Christian's priests and Nuns are severely marginalised in the appointments for any higher authority or positions. Therefore post should be equally allocated post for Dalits and Non Dalits Christians.

### **CONCLUSION**

The caste culture and caste practices are those which are very much rooted and prevalent in the Indian Church with all its domination and oppression of the Dalits within. The Dalit Christians are waiting a long for peaceful solution from the Church authorities here. But lack of sincerity and sensitivity towards the core problems it cannot lead to a peaceful solution. Peaceful solution consists of sincere, honest and speedy attempts to restore justice and equality to the oppressed and the suffering people. That has to come from the authorities, the powerful and the dominant.

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### ***Conflict of Interests***

The author declared no conflict of interests.

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