

**‘CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY
TO
DALITS & CASTE DISCRIMINATION’**

Conference Report

18 – 19th February 2014

St. George’s Cathedral

LONDON SE 1, UK

Organised by:

Christian Network Against Caste Discrimination

[CNACD, UK]

© Copyright 2017 by
Christian Network Against Caste Discrimination (CNACD), UK.

Address :

Voice of Dalit International (VODI)

ICG House, Station Approach
Greenford, London UB6 0AL, UK

Email: vodi@vodintl.org.uk

Web: www.vodintl.org.uk

Design & Layout : Sivaprasad S.V.

Printed by : KGM Press, Ernakulam.



This book is dedicated to the memory of

Dr. BABASAHEB AMBEDKAR

The greatest emancipator of the Untouchables and
the Architect of Indian Constitution

Who raised the following question :

**“What good is Christianity for a Hindu
if it does not do away his Caste ?”**

[Writings and Speeches of Dr. Ambedkar - Volume V]

Foreword

In response to the call to observe the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (WPCU- 2013) by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Vatican and the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches; on Sunday, January 2013, Churches Together in Southall gathered together in St. Anselm's Catholic Church. The theme for this Week of Prayer was 'Dalits and Caste Discrimination', for which the prayer service had been prepared for use throughout the world. We came together in worship and in solidarity with our Dalit brothers and sisters, mindful of the challenging words of Pope John Paul II, to the Catholic Bishops of India.



Fortuitously the theme of WPCU Prayer coincided with efforts in the United Kingdom, to combat caste discrimination on the rise in the British-Asian community. In Spring 2013 UK's anti-discrimination Equality Act, with caste as "an aspect of race" was amended, making it illegal.

In the same year there was also an attempt to get the following Motion adopted in British Overseas NGOs in Development (BOND), the largest network of International Development Agencies in Europe: "That this house calls for BOND members to recognise the role of caste as a root cause of poverty and urges them to raise the profile of issues relating to Dalits."

We continued to meet in Southall to consider ways in which we might support Dalits, both Christian and non-Christian, here and in S. Asia. We brought our concern to Bishop Patrick Lynch, Chair of the Office for Migration Policy, Member CBCEW Department of International Affairs and Episcopal President of the Catholic Association for Racial Justice (CARJ). The result was a 2 days conference on 'Christian Responsibility to Dalits and Caste Discrimination'. This provided an opportunity to bring others in, for caste discrimination poisons the lives of millions of our brothers and sisters, strips them of status and keeps them in abject poverty.

We are thankful to all of our speakers for their informative inputs, particularly to Bishop Patrick Lynch, Lord Bishop Richard Harries, Lord David Alton, Bishop Pete Broadbent, Bishop Sarat Chandra Nayak [Dalit Commission, Catholic Bishop's Conference of India], Prof. Meena Dhanda and Mr. Davinder Prasad [General Secretary, CasteWatchUK].

The Conference has been followed up with a 'roundtable' convened by Lord Bishop Richard Harries and Lord David Alton. Similarly, several other efforts are being made to recognise Caste as the root cause of poverty' of 1/3rd of the Global poor [Dalits] and for making the UK population aware of the need for implementing the UK law relating to caste discrimination. This report, I hope, will help to facilitate that process and provide support to the thousands of activists all over the world who struggle for the human rights and development of Christian and non Christian Dalit communities.

Yours sincerely,

Fr. Gerard Mitchell, S.J

Chair, Christian Network Against Caste Discrimination [CNACD]

St. Anselm's Catholic Church,

The Green, Southall, Middlex UB2 4BE

Invitation from Lord Bishop Richard Harries

The Right Reverend Lord
Harries of Pentregarth
House of Lords,
London SW1 A 0PW



Dear.....,

22nd January 2014

Everyone agrees that Apartheid was an evil that had to be ended. But there is one that is no less bad still in existence today – discrimination against the Dalits, the former untouchables. In some ways this is even worse than Apartheid because of the scale of the problem – there are some 250 million Dalits in the world – and because of its unique form of humiliation and degradation. In every category of social evil, trafficking and forced prostitution, child labour and rape, Dalits will be found to be the main victims. Then of course there is the shocking practice of manual scavenging which still exists.

Caste discrimination originated on the Indian sub continent and has come to infect all major religions, not just Hinduism. The Pope has had to warn Churches in India against it, as have some Anglican bishops, It has also come to this country with the Indian Diaspora.

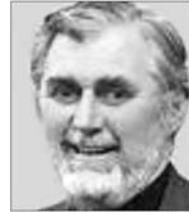
It seems to some of us that the Churches have not been nearly as active as they ought to be in campaigning against this evil, and with a view to doing more a major conference has been mounted in London. I know that your diary is very full and this is short notice but if you were able to be present at any point it would be very good to see you. If you are not able to come or even if you are, would you be good enough to nominate your Social Responsibility Officer or someone who deals with justice issues, so that we can be in touch with them? A similar letter of invitation is going out to Roman Catholic bishops.

I enclose details of the conference, a reply slip and a stamped addressed envelope for favour of a reply.

With good wishes S/D

Invitation from Bishop Patrick Lynch

Bishop Patrick Lynch SS.CC.
6a CresswellPark
Blackheath,
London SE3 9RD



Dear Friends,

January 6th 2014

I am writing to both inform you about and invite you to the upcoming conference on the **“Christian Responsibility to Dalits and Caste Discrimination”** which will take place at Amigo Hall, St. George’s Cathedral, Lambeth Rd. SE1 on February 18th and 19th 2014. Eleven years ago Pope John Paul II recognised the challenge of responding to discrimination when he said to the Bishops of India during their Ad Limina visit in Rome in November 2003:

“At all times you must continue to make certain that special attention is given to those belonging to the lowest castes, especially the Dalits. They should never be separated from other members of society. Any semblance of a caste-based prejudice in relations between Christians is a countersign to authentic human solidarity, a threat to genuine spirituality and a serious hindrance to the church’s mission of evangelization”.

Those sentiments are echoed by Pope Francis in his recent Apostolic Exhortation- *EvangeliiGaudium* -when he stresses the importance of inclusion, peace and social dialogue as key elements of evangelization today when he says: **“Our Faith in Christ who became poor and was always close to the poor and the outcast, is the basis for the integral development of society’s most neglected members” (no. 186).**

I know you will find the speakers informative and inspiring so I hope you will be able to join us. A programme for the two days is attached.

With every good wish and blessing, S/D

Bishop Patrick Lynch S.S.C.C.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following for their valuable contributions, which made the conference possible:

CAFOD, for contributing towards travel expenses of international speakers.

Catholic Association for Racial Justice [CARJ], for contributing towards travel expenses of international speakers.

Department For International Development [DFID], for supporting printing costs of this conference report.

Voice of Dalit International [Conference administrators], for providing voluntary support in managing all aspects of the conference programme and practical housekeeping arrangements.

CONTENTS

	Title.	Page No.
	<i>Message from Fr. Gerard Mitchell SJ</i>	- 5
	<i>Invitation from Bishop Lord Richard Harries</i>	- 7
	<i>Invitation from Bishop Patrick Lynch</i>	- 9
	Acknowledgement	- 10
	<u>Contents</u>	- 11
1.	Press Release	- 13
2.	Introduction to the Conference	- 17
3.	Proceedings of the Conference	- 25
4.	Full Text of Papers Presented:	
	Caste, A Global Overview: <i>Dr. Meena Dhanda</i>	- 45
5.	Caste discrimination and prejudice has no place in 21 st Century Britain: <i>Bishop Lord Richard Harries</i>	- 53
6.	Caste Discrimination in UK: <i>Mr. Davinder Prasad</i>	- 62
7.	Caste Discrimination Testimony: <i>Mr. Maria Doss</i>	- 65
8.	Freedom of Dalits and Dalit Christians in Independent India: <i>Pastor Raju Mohan Thampi</i>	- 66
9.	Dalit Struggles, Within and Outside the Church:	
	<u>Paper 1</u> : Solidarity Work with and for Dalits:	
	<i>Rev. David Haslam</i>	- 68
	<u>Paper 2</u> : Struggle of Dalit Christians within and outside the Church: <i>Prof. Dr. Mary John</i>	- 72
	<u>Paper 3</u> : Dalit Struggles, Within and Outside:	
	<i>Sr. Sneha Gill</i>	- 91
10.	Dalit Poverty, Caste and Christian Responsibility:	
	<i>Bishop Sarat Chandra Nayak</i>	- 98
11.	Make Caste History: <i>Lord David Alton</i>	- 102
12.	Panel Discussion: ‘Beyond 2015’: <i>Mr. Guy Holloway</i>	- 113
	Panel Discussion: ‘Beyond 2015’: <i>Ms. Clarissa Poulson</i>	- 116

13.	INGOS Addressing Caste caused Poverty: <i>Dr. Kumar Prasant</i>	- 119
14.	INGOs Addressing Poverty, A Much Needed Dalit Perspective: <i>Mr. V. J. George</i>	- 122
15.	Christian Responsibility to Dalits and Caste Discrimination: <i>Rt Revd Pete Broadbent</i>	- 133
16.	<i>Group Discussions Reports:</i>	
	<u>Group 1:</u> <i>Prof. David Mosse</i>	- 135
	<u>Group 2:</u> <i>Prof. Meena Dhanda</i>	- 136
	<u>Group 3:</u> <i>Mr. Maria Doss</i>	- 137
	<u>Group 4:</u> <i>Mr. Rajmohan Thampi</i>	- 138
Annex 1	Conference Follow up: Round Table Participants Inputs	- 139
Annex 2	Memorandum of Dalit Christian Liberation Movement to Cardinal Fernando Filoni	- 145
Annex 3	Letter of Indian Bishops Delegation and Memorandum to Holy Father	- 157
Annex 4	Week of Prayer For Christian Unity 2013	- 175
Annex 5	Elavarasan's Story	- 215

1. Press Release:

‘Make Caste Discrimination History’, say Peers

Speaking in a 2 Day Conference, ‘Christian Responsibility to Dalits & Caste Discrimination’, on 18th and 19th February 2014 at St. George’s Cathedral, London, Lord Bishop Richard Harries of Pentregarth and Professor The Lord David Alton of Liverpool exhorted the UK Church communities and others, to root out caste discrimination, which is the cause of poverty of 1/3rd of the Global poor. Both said that the sheer number of people who are subjected to discrimination and dehumanisation has made the issue vital and requiring the immediate attention and support of UK Church communities, as they have done for the Anti-Slavery and Anti-Apartheid movements.

Over the 2 days, the conference was attended by 90 delegates from Church groups, NGOs and INGOs of UK, Canada and USA, together with guest speakers from India. The conference upheld the theme of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (WPCU) 2013, ‘Dalits and Caste Discrimination’. Lord Harries narrated his experience in bringing an amendment to the Equality Act 2010, making caste discrimination illegal. He appealed for all political parties and people from all walks of UK life, to support the efforts for its implementation. Dr. Meena Dhanda, Project Leader and co-author of Government commissioned EHRC research on ‘Caste in Britain’ presented a Global overview. Mr. Davinder Prasad, General Secretary, Caste watch UK provided a UK community perspective.

Addressing the conference, Lord Alton presented the pattern of caste caused Dalit poverty and urged the UK Church communities and their allied institutions to recognise and support the ongoing efforts in the UK and Global arena to address caste discrimination and raise the Dalit profile.

The conference reflected the implementation process of UK caste legislation and considered ways of reducing opposition. There was general agreement that the Churches should take lead in the process and build consensus amongst UK Church denominations. Also for UK based aid agencies and human rights organisations, to be more active in this issue, both in UK and abroad.

Rev. David Haslam, as a founding trustee, presented the past and present work of the Dalit Solidarity Network UK [DSNUK] and internationally. Prof. Dr. Mary John, National Chair of the National Council of Dalit Christians (NCDC) spoke on the prevalence of caste, even amongst Christians, and caste discrimination which Dalit Christians continue to face in the Indian Church, civil society and from the government. He said that in the Roman Catholic Church, “80% of Christians in India are Dalits but they are not represented adequately in the Church hierarchy; of 170 Catholic Bishops in India, only 9, or 5%, are from the Dalit Catholic Community; Dalit priests are only 4% of the clergy; There is a deliberate move to ensure that Dalit youth do not complete seminary education and ordained as priests.” Sr. Sneha Gill, also representing NCDC, criticised the attitude of some of the Indian Church hierarchy, for not supporting the long standing campaign of Dalit Christians for equal Constitutional rights, suggesting that if the Church had supported the struggle, the government would have yielded much earlier.

The first day discussions centred around the theme of unpacking Pope John Paul II’s address to the Indian Bishops in November 2003, wherein he stressed, ‘At all times you must continue to make certain that special attention is given to ...Dalits, they should never be segregated from ...the society, any semblance of a caste based prejudice...is a countersign to authentic human solidarity...’. Bishop Patrick Lynch, Chair of the Office for Migration Policy and Member of Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales’ [CBCEW] Department of International Affairs, moderated the first day of the conference and provided valuable insights.

The theme of the second day was, ‘Addressing Dalit Poverty’. The second day was jointly moderated by representatives from the Catholic Association for Racial Justice (CARJ), Mr. Richard Zipfel, Trustee and Mrs. Yogi Sutton, Chairperson. Presenting his keynote address, Bishop Sarat Chandra Nayak, of Berhampur Diocese, Orissa, India, reiterated the need for the Church to address caste discrimination by treating it as a sin and as against the gospel of Jesus. Bishop Sarat further said that in all Church based development projects, Dalits must become a cross cutting thematic area.

Department for International Development [DFID] and Commonwealth Foundation [CF] representatives led the ‘Beyond 2015’ panel session.

Ms. Clarissa Poulson [Triple Line Consulting, representing DFID] explained that whilst DFID's post 2015 aid budget would not be directly supporting India, Dalit issues were very important in realising the UK Government's ambition to 'Leave No-one Behind'. Mr. Guy Holloway [CF] presented ways in which Dalit issues would continue to be supported through the Common wealth Foundation. Presenting a Dalit development perspective, Mr. V.J. George, National Convener, NCDC and General Secretary, DALITAID-INDIA questioned the general trend of International Aid Agencies [IAA] of addressing symptoms rather than the root cause of Dalit poverty. Like Lord Alton, he also quoted DFID's policy paper, 'Reducing Poverty by Tackling Social Exclusion', stating that "caste causes poverty and gets into the way of poverty reduction...." In his presentation, Dr. Kumar Prasant, Director, Visionaries in Creative Action for Liberation and Progress [VICALP], Orissa, India, also described the current, traditional IAA's approach of addressing Dalit poverty as ineffective. Bishop Pete Broadbent, Bishop of Willesden and Deputy Bishop of London made the concluding speech and assured his full support.

Suggestions for further considerations included:

- 1) The struggle of Dalit Christians for equal Constitutional rights in India is a just and humane issue which needs the support from international Church communities. UK Church and allied agencies should support the work of NCDC in India and the implementation of Equality Act 2010 Section 9(5) in the UK.
- 2) Institutions and agencies involved in addressing Dalit and Global poverty issues should have a Dalit Desk, Dalit consultants and professionals. Dalit poverty must be a cross cutting thematic area in the monitoring and evaluation of development projects.
- 3) As Dalits form 1/3rd of the Global poor, likewise a proportionate share of global international development resources should be allocated in addressing Dalit poverty.
- 4) Important cultural dates, such as Dalit Liberation Day (December) and Ambedkar Day (April), could be used as Global awareness raising opportunities. Need for international exposure and skill training of Dalit leaders and future leaders was also expressed.
- 5) DALITAID-INDIA, a Dalit led development agency needs to be promoted, together with implementing a National Model Dalit Community Development Project in Orissa, India.

For further information:

Fr. Gerard Mitchell SJ,

Parish Priest, St. Anselm's, Southall, London

[Chair, Conference Organising Committee]

C/o Conference Administrator:

Voice of Dalit International

Emails: frgerardmitchellsj@vodintl.org.uk /

vodi@vodintl.org.uk

2. Introduction to the Conference

“Untouchability is far worse than slavery, for the latter may be abolished by statute. It will take more than a law to remove the stigma from the people of India. Nothing less than the aroused opinion of the world can do it”.

-Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Architect of India’s Constitution.

The Conference: was the result of Churches Together in Southall, London celebrating the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2013 (WPCU 2013) (Ref: Appendix I), the subsequent meetings by a group of interested people and guidance from Bishop Pat Lynch, Catholic Bishops Conference of England & Wales (CBCEW). This was one of the first two Conferences planned for 2014 and 2015.



(Bishop Patrick Lynch moderating Day 1 morning session)

Objectives of the Conference:

1. UK Church officially recognise the existence of Dalits and Caste discrimination as a live issue both in the UK and internationally.

2. Church takes the responsibility of educating the UK Catholics/general public, involving, through more than 2500 Catholic Schools in the UK and subsequently in India.
3. Church related Aid agencies recognising Dalits and Caste Discrimination as a Thematic area in their work and allocate appropriate funding in place to address the issue both in the UK and internationally.
4. Initiate a Campaign like Make Poverty History Campaign – ‘Make Caste Discrimination History Campaign’ – involving those entire organisations which are involved and interested in the issue.
5. Launch a National Model Dalit Community Development Project in Orissa, India as an expression of solidarity to the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2013.

Conference Background – from the context of VODI

Several years of VODI Trustees’ accumulated development experience with the poor in S. Asia, particularly India taught us that:

- i. Human life is the cheapest thing available in India (S. Asia);
- ii. 95% of development time, energy and resources are wasted on combating oppositions against development because of a ‘*general Caste mindset*’. This stipulates how different segments of caste based society should live as touchables or untouchables, humans or sub-humans. The whole life from morning till night, from birth to death of more than 50% of Indian population, is predetermined.
- iii. Poverty issue has two sides – one side, symptoms of poverty, that the international development sector, including the Church related aid agencies, is presently engaged with; and the other side – ‘caste’, which is the ‘root cause’ of Dalit poverty, which is being ignored by the same sector, which claim to address ‘the root cause of Poverty’. Present symptomatic addressing of Dalit poverty, often supported by a generous UK public, is done by ignoring the ‘root cause of poverty’ of Dalits, 90% of who are poor.
- iv. Indian NGOs are mostly owned, controlled and managed by non-Dalits, who tackle Dalit development in parts and do not address it holistically by tackling caste as the root cause of poverty of Dalits. Unknowing the fact that 90% of the poor in India are Dalits, the international agencies that support Indian NGOs also follow a short-cut approach and defend themselves by saying that they work in India among the Dalits.

v. The present developmental results reached through Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) by aid agencies are easily reversible with just one stroke of caste discrimination action as in the recent case of Ilavarasan and other Caste killing that take place every day in India.

vi. India plays double standards to keep its international image by covering the caste factor in its socio-economic and political life and the fact that Caste and class are synonymous in the country.

vii. Even those Christian communities in the West, who support the official Church agencies for more than 50 years are kept ignorant about the root cause of poverty of Dalits in India but are told that these agencies are tackling the root cause of poverty and empowering the poor.

Church and Indian Dalits:

- 80% of Christians in India are from Dalit background [Ref: Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2013.] (60% Catholics & 40% Non-Catholics).

- Church in India wield ‘unproportionate’ influence in India in many fields and has enormous potentials to support socio-economic and political development initiatives to address Dalit issues. VODI’s Trustees have long years of working under Church initiatives, which created development models.

- Dalits and backward communities have embraced Christianity mainly to escape from the inhuman caste discrimination and for equal and fair treatment. (Ref: WPCU 2013).

- Caste discrimination within the Church is the same as in the society, with separate churches / entrances / seating / cemeteries / pathways. Caste Christians monopolise church communities / hierarchy / institutions / policies.

- Although Church in India is famous for its Charity/service activities and has history of taking stands for safeguarding its educational/land holdings rights, it has not taken a political stand for its majority Dalit Christians. The recent Dalit Christian struggle in Delhi and the involvement of a section of Church hierarchy, is the result of several years of campaign by lay people, National Council for Dalit Christians (NCDC) and, subsequent support from the Dalit Commissions of Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI) and National Council of Churches in India (NCCI).

- Persecution of Christians in India is basically due to their Dalit background. In India, the Christian issue is a Dalit issue and the Dalit issue a Christian issue.

VODI addressing Dalit issues:

Although the objective of starting VODI in 1999 was to internationally raise the profile of Dalits in India, soon we were confronted with the reality of caste discrimination in the UK. Through our 1st International Conference in London in 2000, this was revealed along with the need for international aid agencies reviewing their aid policies. Main paper presentations included:

i. ‘Caste in Britain’ from Mr. Satpal Muman, a community leader, presented proof of caste discrimination in UK. This provided a base for CastewatchUK to evolve and subsequently work for UK legislation with Section 9(5) in the Equality Act 2010 and Amendment in 2013.

ii. ‘International Aid Agencies Addressing Dalit Issues’ from Leo Bashyam, Asia Desk, Christian Aid. Dalit Solidarity Network UK (DSN-UK) later adopted this paper and subsequently the Department for International Development, UK (DFID) used it as base paper for its conference. This resulted in DFID releasing a Policy Paper, ‘Reducing Poverty by Tackling Social Exclusion’, where the impact of caste on poverty was categorically brought out. This Policy stand of DFID is a cardinal guideline for international aid/development agencies working in India and South Asia.

iii. VODI’s International work:

- a) Development support to Projects in India – through DFID funding;
- b) Training of Dalit leaders and future leaders jointly sponsored by VODI and Catholic Association for Racial Justice (CARJ);
- c) Supporting the formation of DALITAID India, a community led funding consortium to address Dalit development issues;
- d) Establishing a Model Dalit Community Development Project in India; and
- e) Working through international development networks for policy changes, such as British Overseas NGOs in Development (BOND), to influence change to international aid and development policies to address the root cause of poverty of 1/3rd of the Global poor. In the recent (November 2013) Annual General Body Meeting of BOND, VODI Proposed the following Motion, which was Seconded by Skillshare International: *“That this house calls for Bond members to recognise the role of caste as a root cause of poverty and urges them to raise the profile of issues*

relating to Dalits". This Motion secured 21 votes For, with 34 Against, so it was decided to try again the following year.

In UK: VODI's Networking with:

UK Diaspora Dalit communities, leading to local work and national work, alongside Dalit Solidarity groups, and Church communities and agencies, which led to the formation of the Christian Network Against Caste Discrimination, and its February 2014 conference.

Some facts about Caste internationally and in the UK:

1.5 billion People are affected by casteism and living, in 132 countries, including 110 countries where the South Asians have migrated like in the UK. The population ratio of a caste affected society will be: Dalits of Hindu faith, 25%; Non-Dalits of all faiths, 60%; (both these categories are caste victims – on a graded basis) and; Caste profiteers, 15%. Only this 15% are beneficiaries of casteism and 85% are Caste victims, with 25% as acute victims.

In UK, it is estimated that there are 1 Million potential Caste victims of different faiths from India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

Some facts about International Aid Agencies/ similar bodies addressing Poverty:

Aid Agencies including Church related ones use jargons such as, 'challenging the causes of poverty', 'tackling the root cause of poverty', 'empowerment' and 'sustainability'. They are forced to use these words in their mission of discharging their work because of their previous agreements with UK Government, as part of receiving large grants, to tackle 'the root cause of poverty' and 'educate the UK public' on the causes of poverty in the world and its relationships with the UK. However, as far as Dalit poverty is concerned, the root cause of Dalit poverty is caste discrimination, about which aid agencies, including the Church supported ones are silent and stubbornly reluctant to address. (Ref: Report of the visit of Bishop Neethinathan's delegation to SCIAF). From this angle, a big question to all the Church/ aid agencies is, how can one think of 'challenging the causes of poverty', 'tackling the root cause of poverty', 'empowerment', 'sustainability' when there is an unwillingness to examine the existence of Caste discrimination in Dalit poverty.

Involvement of Churches:

1. Address of Pope John Paul II

“At all times, you must continue to make certain that special attention is given to those belonging to the lowest castes, especially the Dalits. They should never be segregated from other members of society. Any semblance of a caste-based prejudice in relations between Christians is a countersign to authentic human solidarity, a threat to genuine spirituality and a serious hindrance to the Church’s mission of evangelization. Therefore, customs or traditions that perpetuate or reinforce caste division should be sensitively reformed so that they may become an expression of the solidarity of the whole Christian community.”

2. Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (WPCU) 2013:

Principle findings are:

- i. A ‘context of great injustice to Dalits in India and in the Church’ (P.4)
- ii. ‘Casteism results in the Dalits being socially marginalised, politically under-represented, economically exploited and culturally subjugated’ (P.4)
- iii. “The situation facing the people of God in the time of Micah can be compared to the situation of Dalit community in India. [P.5] Dalits face oppression and injustice from those wishing to deny their rights / dignity’
- iv. Caste is ‘a Church Dividing Issue’ and thereby becomes an issue of sharing the resources and powers in the Church. (P.4)
- v. ‘Christian disunity in India within Churches and between them is further accentuated by Caste system’ (P.4)
- vi. “80 - 90% of Indian Christians have a Dalit background.”
- vii. Caste is ‘an acute doctrinal issue’ (P.4)
- viii. ‘The Churches in India remain divided along the doctrinal divisions’ (P.4)
- ix. Need for ‘dismantling of Casteism’.
- x. Casteism poses severe challenges ‘for the moral and ecclesial witness of the Church as the one body of Christ’ (P.4)
- xi. ‘Christians in India should reject caste divisions’
- xii. ‘Visible unity cannot be disassociated from the dismantling of casteism’

- xiii. Need for 'lifting up of contributions to unity by the poorest of the poor' [p 4].
- xiv. For establishing Christ's Church, we are called to break down such walls of divisions among and between us."
- xv. 'Casteism, like apartheid, racism and nationalism pose severe challenges for the unity of Christians in India'. (P.4)
- xvi. 'Christians in India should reject caste divisions' (P.10)

These findings of WPCU 2013 are binding for Catholics/ Christians worldwide:

Pope Francis:

"Our Faith in Christ who became poor and was always close to the poor and the outcast, is the basis for the integral development of society's most neglected members"(no. 186).

The World amazes at the stand of Pope Francis to be with the poor and excluded. His self-example to reach out to the lowly is the need of the hour of the Church.

3. Proceedings of the Conference

The Conference was opened on 18th morning by **Bishop Patrick Lynch**, Chair of the Office for Migration Policy, Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales (CBCEW); and the Episcopal Chair of Catholic Association for Racial Justice (CARJ), who also welcomed the gathering, speakers and guests from abroad. Bishop also chaired the morning session. The formal welcome address was delivered by **Fr. Gerard Mitchell SJ**, Parish Priest, St. Anselm's, Southall, London, and Chair of the Conference Organising Committee.



[Fr Gerard Mitchell SJ providing the Welcome Address, Bishop Patrick Lynch chairing]

Session - I. Caste: A Global Overview

The first session was on Caste: A Global Overview, paper presented by Dr. Meena Dhandra, Reader of Philosophy, Culture and Politics, University of Wolverhampton. Dr. Meena spoke in detail on Caste, its divisions, the spread, scale and depth of caste divisions, the threat of such divisions to all attempts to bring people together in collective struggles, be they spiritual, political, economic or social. Her power point presentation also included the common features of the manifestation of caste in South Asia and around the Globe.



[Bishop Patrick Lynch and Dr. Meena Dhanda presenting group report]

Dr. Meena Dhanda [pictured] referred to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination 1965 (ICERD), Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), CERD’s interpretation of caste, General Recommendation 29 of CERD, Caste as a ground for non-discrimination in the constitutions of SAARC states, Caste as a ground for non-discrimination in the constitutions outside of South Asia, occupational castes found in Somalia, gender and caste issues. Dr. Meena concluded the paper by referring to the Dalit women’s protest, Janabai (1298-1350), Solidarity for Dalit liberation and placed special emphasis on James Massey’s call for a Dalit theology.

Session - II : ‘Caste Discrimination and Prejudice has no place in 21st Century Britain’.

The Rt. Rev. Lord Harries of Pentregarth presented a very lively and highly informative session. The presentation consisted of Caste discrimination prevailing in UK, its origin in UK, extent of population subjected to caste discrimination, details of studies carried out by various organisations. He referred to ‘No Escape: Caste Discrimination in the UK’, published in 2006 by Dalit Solidarity Network UK, 50% of *Dalits* in UK found themselves to be identified by their caste, and 85% of all those questioned believed that Indians “actively practised and participated in the caste system”. Lord Harries also referred to the Anti Caste Discrimination Alliance’s research study in 2009, on the attitudes and perceptions of caste discrimination among the South Asian community in Britain which revealed shocking experiences of community members: negative or discriminatory treatment in the workplace (mostly from colleagues); verbal ‘caste’ abuse experienced by Under 12 students, including from school teachers.

Lord Harries also referred to the amendment to the Equality Bill passed by House of Lords in 2010, enabling the British government to include ‘caste’ under the protected characteristic of ‘race’. The provision in Section 9(5) was passed by the Commons on April 6 2010 and the Equality Bill was granted Royal Assent on 8 April 2010. According to Section 9 (5) of the Equality Act 2010 “A Minister of the Crown may by Order amend this section so as to provide for caste to be an aspect of race” should evidence be found that caste discrimination was taking place in the UK in the areas covered by the Equality Act 2010.

He referred to the Labour Government commissioning **the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR)** to investigate the extent of caste-based discrimination and harassment in the UK. Their findings published in December 2010 found evidence of caste-based discrimination, including in the area of work, particularly in terms of bullying, recruitment, promotion and task allocation.

Lord Harries provided case studies taken from personal testimonies in the Anti Caste Discrimination Alliance report, ‘*Hidden Apartheid*’, similar to the ones identified in NIESR’s report, to illustrate how caste discrimination may and does manifest itself in the UK. He also referred to the landmark Begraj case [of an Indian couple belonging to different caste groups who became the first in UK to illustrate caste discrimination in the court system].

He further said that Caste discrimination is a matter of growing international concern and discrimination based on Caste is prohibited by international human rights law. A number of UN bodies have commented on the lack of legislation against caste discrimination in the UK. The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) has on two occasions recommended the UK government to enact a prohibition against caste discrimination. In 2011, CERD explicitly recommended that the Minister invoke the clause in the Equality Act for “caste to be an aspect of race” In 2012, the UK was recommended to prohibit caste discrimination during the second examination of its human rights record by the Universal Periodic Review mechanism, under the UN Human Rights Council.

Lord Harries concluded that as there are clear incidents of caste-based discrimination in the UK, no matter how infrequently this practice occurs, those who experience it should *not* be left without clear protection in law. There is no place for caste discrimination in the UK. All other forms of discrimination are covered by statute and caste should be no exception. Victims of caste-based discrimination should be given a similar level of protection accorded to victims of other forms of unacceptable discrimination.

Session III: Plenary session: ‘Dalit Struggles, Within and Outside’

This Plenary session had 4 paper presentations: Rev. David Haslam [UK]; Prof. Mary John [India]; Sr. Sneha Gill [India]; Dr Kumar Prasanth [India]

Paper 1: Solidarity Work with and for Dalits



*[Rev. David Haslam addressing the conference,
Bishop Patrick Lynch chairing]*

Presented by **Rev. David Haslam**, Founding Trustee of Dalit Solidarity Network UK [DSNUK]. He reflected on what solidarity work means and gave examples of DSNUK's achievements. He covered solidarity work in 3 stages - the **Awakening**, relating to learning a great deal about caste during his travels along the north-west border of India with Pakistan, and extending to Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Madurai. The second stage of **Responding** related to the application of his experiences from the Anti Apartheid Movement to initiate some further campaigning. This consisted of the adoption of the principles of solidarity, listening to the oppressed, dialoguing with them as to what from outside might be done, carrying out agreed actions and then reflecting on the results. This led the involvement of other interested people in churches and agencies, setting up of DSN UK in 1998, International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN) in March 2000 and raising the caste issue in the World Conference against Racism in Durban in 2001. The third stage of **Broadening and Deepening the work** relates to establishing links with various organisations, getting it closer to a few politicians committed on human rights, working from time to time with them and other groups, raising caste discrimination with companies and banks who were expanding in India. On the international level DSN UK was a key partner in IDSN. IDSN gained acceptance by careful lobbying in the European Commission and various UN bodies. Despite continual resistance by

India, the UN describes caste discrimination as ‘discrimination by work and descent’

Rev. Haslam highlighted other developments, including: ‘*The Dalit Drum*’ CD, made in India in 2007 by Christian singer/songwriter Garth Hewitt and Christian Aid; ‘Global Conference on Justice for Dalits’, Bangkok, in March 2009, organised by World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). [This issued a comprehensive *Call to the Churches* to address caste discrimination]; a New Delhi conference in October 2010 by National Council of Churches of India, that declared caste discrimination a sin; the book ‘Dalit Theology in the 21st Century’ and the start up of a UK Churches’ Dalit Support Group, to bring together church representatives at national and local level who are concerned about caste discrimination. [Also outcome of WCC / LWF Conference].

He concluded the presentation by comparing the struggle against caste discrimination, often seeming like pushing a snowball up a hill, the nearer you get to the top, the harder it gets. He said there were glimpses of light and causes for optimism, and it is always important to remember how long the struggles against slavery, colonialism and apartheid were. It may well get worse before it gets better, but who even in the mid-1980s thought Nelson Mandela would walk free by the end of the decade and become President of a free South Africa in 1994.

Paper 2 : Struggle of Dalit Christians within and outside the Church

This paper was presented by **Prof. Dr .M. Mary John**, National president, National Council of Dalit Christians (NCDC). He has very lucidly explained the historical problem of castes, the oppression and discrimination against Dalits segregated and oppressed for more than 2 millennium. According to Prof. Dr .M. Mary John, Dalit Christians (i.e., Dalits converted to Christianity over the centuries) in India **remain thrice discriminated**, viz. By the Indian Church, State and Society. Dalit Christians are treated in the Indian caste society as untouchable and discriminated in the same way as the other Dalits; the Indian State denies them the constitutional Scheduled Castes (SCs) rights and protection solely because they converted into Christianity ever since 1950 when India became a Republic. Most unfortunately Dalit Christians suffer casteism and blatant discrimination and severe marginalization within the Indian Church too. Though Dalits, they are discriminated by the State because they are Christians. Though Christians, they are discriminated by the Church because they are Dalits. Dalit Christians are taking up struggles against these multiple discrimination.



[Prof. Mary John addressing the conference]

Professor Mary John [pictured]. He has also compared the caste discrimination prevailing in the Indian Church with that in the society. While in the Indian society it is about 80% of Caste people oppressing and dominating the Dalits who are about 20%, in the Indian Church it is about 30% Caste Christians oppressing and dominating the Dalit Christians who are about 70%. He therefore states that the caste domination is much stronger in the Church. Further, they have to struggle a lot to get even some fringe benefits and rights available from the Church. This makes Dalit Christians still severely marginalized in the Church. He said that the history of Dalit Christians starts with the history of Christianity in India. Brahmin and dominant caste converts did not want them to be their equals. The foreign missionaries accommodated castes with the pretext that it is the cultural characteristic of the Indian society. The low castes and the untouchables were forbidden to join seminaries. To accommodate the caste division and practices, even separate missionary works were carried out among the dominant castes and the Dalits, and separate Churches were built for them. The attempts of foreign missionaries to prevent these caste practices were met with stiff resistance and in some instances physically assaulted too. In spite of the Western ideas of equality and the Gospel value of brotherhood, caste segregations remain. Prof. Dr .M. Mary John also narrated some Classical Cases of Caste Discrimination and atrocity against Dalit Christians at several places in Tamil Nadu State, India.

According to Prof. Dr .M. Mary John, Caste culture remains as a systemic malaise in the Indian Church. The present situation for Dalit Christians is the continuation of the past tradition of castes. They are being discriminated in administering Sacraments and in death even. The prevalence of the caste-based practice in some parts of the Church in

India is not only a denial of human dignity and equality but also against the fundamental teachings of Christ. Though CBCI through its statements on various occasions condemned the Caste discrimination and advocated equal rights for Dalit Christians in the India Church, the caste discrimination in the Indian Church continues.

Prof. Dr .M. Mary John also referred to the negligible representation of Dalits in education and employment in the Catholic institutions, the least consideration for their admission even in a few Catholic medical colleges in India, and the least representation of Dalit priests and nuns as heads of these Institutions, in the post of directors, in administration and employment in the diocesan social service societies. In effect, the leading institutions of the Church established by the huge donations got in the name of uplifting the Dalits and other marginalized people, remain inaccessible to the Dalits. He presented the Catholics data published by Claretian Publications based on Catholic Directory of India 2013 of the CBCI and the CBCI commission for SC/ST, to show the glaring facts about the least representation of Dalits in the Catholic Church in India. He said that while the Tribal Catholics in India are about 1.2 million and they have about 20 bishops and a Cardinal, Dalit Catholics who are about 18 million have only 8 Dalit bishops, with no Dalit archbishop and Cardinal. Even today, conversion to Christianity in India takes place mostly among the Dalits. It is nothing but colonization of the vocation and hierarchy by the dominant castes. The catholic hierarchy in India as well as the Vatican owe an explanation for this extreme exclusion of Dalit Catholics.

The Catholic Church hierarchy in India is totally neglecting its response and responsibility to Dalit Christians. It is in fact indifferent, antagonistic and hostile to any change in their favour. It does a lot of make believe exercise to convince or appear to the world Christian community, organizations and the Vatican that it is concerned and taking care of the Dalits. This is the greatest hurdle to Dalit Christians to get the support of Vatican and the world Christian community for their rights and their struggle for justice and for their developmental initiative. So it is all the more clear that the Vatican and the world Christianity has to take greater responsibility for Dalit Christians

The Indian Church is not going to be kind to Dalit Christians and therefore they certainly need the support of the world Christianity particularly the Vatican, the World Council of Churches and global Christian organizations. Prof. Dr .M. Mary John referred to the representation made to through the Apostolic Nuncio in India and meeting of DCLM delegation with Cardinal Fernando Filoni of the Propaganda Fide in February 2013,

As someone who has been in the forefront of the struggles for so many years, Pro. Dr. Mary John expects to record this as a strong message in this international conference. The Indian Church needs to be cleansed of the caste culture to liberate Dalit Christians. It is an important and uphill task which requires the participation of the world Christianity. Combating casteism remains a task much more difficult than it was in the case of racism and apartheid. Yet, it is a historical task which this international conference could initiate.

To really understand what the world Christian responsibility should be, it is important to look at or witness the painful struggles the Dalit Christians have been taking up during the past 25 years and the way the Indian Catholic Church responds to it. The Catholic hierarchy in India is misinforming the Holy See about Dalit Christians demand for justice and equality and their struggle for the same. If the Vatican is serious about justice, equality and human dignity it preaches, it should first and foremost take up the issue of Dalit Christians within the Church with great concern. It needs to change its perception of Dalit Christian issue and has to listen to the victims voice. Dalit Christians remain stranded in the cross-roads of caste and religion. They are discriminated by the Church because they are Dalits, and they are discriminated by the Indian State because they are Christians.

The hegemony of the dominant caste clergy, bishops and hierarchy continues against Dalit Christians vocation, against their appointment as bishops, cardinals, provincials and superiors of religious congregations and as institutional heads, etc. When questioned about the low representation of Dalit Christians they explain it away saying that it is the call of the Holy Spirit. It is their calculated moves that prevent these to Dalit Christians and it is therefore not the Holy Spirit, but obviously the caste spirit here that is preventing or denying these for Dalits.

Casteism comes in the way of Dalit Christian's spiritual and civil rights in the Church. A deep and vivid understanding of the situation is necessary and it should be viewed from the victims perspective. Their legitimate demand and assertion for justice and equal rights is often turned into caste war by the bishops and clergy. They even misuse the civil authorities against Dalit Christians with their position of strength, the Church machinery and resources. The Dalit Christians are denied of the statutory safeguards given to other Dalits and this makes their situation still worse. This calls for greater struggle but even in their struggle to secure the constitutional SC right from the government, the Indian Church and the bishops are not with them. They give only a nominal collaboration which amounts to disowning the Dalits when they face injustice. Dalit Christians cannot be tolerant about these any longer just as they have been in the

past. It would be imprudent on the part of the Church hierarchies and authorities to expect them to be tolerant and it would be unworthy on the part of Dalit Christians to continue to be silent victims even today.

Prof. Dr .M. Mary John made some concrete suggestions on behalf of the Dalit Christians. They are; requirement of international support to fight Caste discrimination, International Aid Agencies to give special importance in their policy approach and funding support, creation of a Commission and a Dalit Desk in the Vatican with a mandate to deal with Dalit Christian issues, Vatican's resolve to promote Dalits vocation, Dalit bishops and cardinals to ensure a fair representation of Dalit Christians, an audience with Holy Father the Pope to a delegation of Dalit Christian leaders and formation of An' International Christian Network against Caste discrimination in the Church to continue the international initiative for Dalit Christians.

Paper 3: Struggle of Dalit Christians within and outside the Church



[From right hand: Bishop Patriyk Lynch, Sr Sneha Gill, Prof. Mary John and Rev. David Haslam]

The paper was presented by **Sister Sneha Gill, Advocate, Presentation Sisters [pictured]**. She dealt with the subject totally in the context of the denial of the scheduled castes rights and protection to Dalit Christians by a Presidential Order on 10 August 1950. She was also talking about the Litigation 180/2004 filed in the Supreme Court of India in 2004 by the Centre for Public Interest Litigation & T. Franklin Caesar against Union of India (Respondent) to declare the paragraph 3 of Presidential order unconstitutional. The Presidential Order (SC) 1950, Paragraph 3, states, “no person who professes a religion different from Hinduism shall be deemed to be a member of Scheduled Castes”. This law was amended twice to extend the SC status to Sikh Dalits and Buddhist Dalits. However, this religion-based discrimination by the State

continues for Dalit Christians and Dalit Muslims.

The Order acts as a stumbling block to extend the Scheduled Castes privileges to the above said people in the field of education, employment, political reservation, affirmative action, welfare measures, legal protection under Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention) of Atrocities Act 1989, when these people are victimised in the society because of untouchability and so on (for availing the Indian constitutional special provisions under Articles 16, 46, 330, 332, 335, 338, 341, 366- 24), though their Castes names are there in the Schedule of the above said Order.

Dalit Christians have been taking up mass struggles against this injustice. In the past 8 years especially, the National Council of Dalit Christians (NCDC), in collaboration with the SC/BC Commissions of the Catholic Bishops Conferences of India (CBCI) and the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI), has been taking up continuous struggles. She also referred to the Police action on the peaceful rally of Dalit Christians in Delhi on 11 December 2013.

The Government of Indian asked National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities (NCRLM) to study the social and educational backwardness of Christians and Muslims of Scheduled caste origin on the conferment of Scheduled caste status to them. The commission submitted a report favouring the Dalit Muslims and Dalit Christians. As per the Directives of the Supreme Court, both the National Commission for Minorities and the National Commission for Scheduled Castes were considered as Co Respondents along with Union of India. On 18.07.2012, the National Commission for Minorities' Affidavit was filed in the Supreme Court of India, and the same recommended for outright removal of the provision in Constitution (Scheduled Caste) Order, 1950 which confines the SC status strictly to three specified religions to the exclusion of all other religions. Similarly on 04.04.2011, the National Commission for Scheduled Castes' Affidavit was sent to the Ministry of Law and Justice's Wing, which says that reservation should be extended to them but the share of 15% of SCs now available should not be disturbed.

Since there is no political consensus on the issue and as the litigation is pending in the Supreme Court of India and matter is sub-judice, the most practical option is to try for speedy justice from the Supreme Court of India after receiving the Counter Affidavit (Written Statement) from the Union of India. This is pending since January 2008, though the Union of India had assured to the Supreme Court of India that it would bring response; even after so many assurances, Union of India does not file its response to the Apex Court. Filing written statement (Counter Affidavit) on the stand Union of India on the issue to the Court of Law is natural justice, and not to do so in this case is nothing but denial of natural justice. The Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs ought to take a revised Cabinet decision and render justice to these people through the

Apex Court of India. She called for the collective co-operation of the Policy makers, Executives, Civil Society including the Christian community, Academicians, International community etc., for the same.

Paper 4: Caste caused Poverty

This paper was presented by Dr. Kumar Prasanth, General Secretary, VICALP and Vice Chair of DALITAID India. He said he started as a development worker through a reputed NGO in south Odisha known for its community development work among the marginalised groups in south Odisha. His responsibilities in the organisation gave him an opportunity to represent the organisation in various forums as well as closely interact with donor agencies. From all these experiences, he understood that it is the poverty caused by caste system, which enforces upon Dalits a life of perpetual poverty, deprivation, lowliness, servitude, beggary and condemns Dalits for being Dalits. The caste system enforces landlessness, discriminatory practices, denial of rights, violation of human rights in the name of faith and religion and justifies atrocity on Dalits as part of recommended punitive measures and therefore morally right. The Dalits are considered to be perpetually landless people and ordained to be so by the caste society, whereas the Tribal's have been given protection and their land rights including forest land rights is well protected by law. He also explained about the VICALP which began its journey as a grass-root based and Dalit-Adivasi led community organization. Discussed about how a donor agency can come forward to promote Dalit organizations and help them to take up Dalit issues in the most effective manner.

Session IV: Dalit Poverty, Caste and Christian Responsibility



[Bishop Sarat Chandra Nayak addressing session chaired by Mr. Richard Zipfel]

This paper was presented by Bishop Sarat Chandra Nayak, Bishop of Berhampur, Orissa, India. Bishop Sarat Chandra Nayak analysed the three different concepts **Dalit Poverty**, **CASTE** and **Christian Responsibility**. Caste not only causes poverty but also perpetuates it. Poverty starts with Casteism and Christian Responsibility cannot end without effectively addressing the issue of Caste.

Dalit Poverty: In the Ninth Five-Year Plan (199-2002), the concept of Below Poverty Line (BPL) was set according to the annual family income in India. Families with less than Rs. 20,000 income, less than two hectares land, and no television or refrigerator were placed Below Poverty Line. This income is bare minimum to support the food requirements and does not provide much for the other basic essential items like health, education etc. Tenth Five-Year Plan, BPL for rural areas was based on the degree of deprivation in respect of 13 parameters like landholding, type of house, clothing, food security, sanitation, consumer durables, literacy status, labour force, means of livelihood, status of children, type of indebtedness, reasons for migration etc. Whereas for urban areas it was based on the degree of deprivation in respect of seven parameters: roof, floor, water, sanitation, education level, type of employment, and status of children in a house.

Mahatma Gandhi believed in raising the status of Dalits, by removing the degrading stigma and manifestations of untouchability, while retaining the traditional caste system. On the other hand Dr Ambedkar believed that only by destroying the caste system could 'untouchability' be destroyed. Unfortunately, though the Indian Constitution legally removed untouchability from the Indian society, it could not blot it out from the Indian mentality. 90% of Dalits live in rural areas and a majority of them have no land, the major source of income in rural areas. They lack educational qualification & skills to get jobs that would fetch them more salary. Traditionally, they are engaged in so called menial jobs like Sweeper, Washer man, barber, cobbler, blacksmith, drummer, cleaner etc., that get the least wages. Dalit children are not allowed /expected to aspire for the higher /respectable jobs that get higher salary. Therefore, the much needed upward movement in terms of earning more does not take place.

The Christian Dalits in India suffer the worse, for they lose all benefits / privileges / reservations that is given to other Dalits (Scheduled Castes), as affirmative action. They are doubly discriminated. It is an injustice Dalit Christians in India are fighting against for the past sixty three years. A Public Interest Litigation is filed in the Supreme Court of India, in 2004, challenging the constitutional validity of the 1950 Presidential Order through which Christian Dalits are excluded from the Scheduled Caste Status and from all its benefit, purely on the religious ground. For the

Indian Constitution does not allow any discrimination on its citizens based on religion. Supreme Court has asked the Government of India its response to the issue, but for the last ten years the Government is, with various pretexts delaying in giving its response. The Supreme Court, it seems to me, also does not feel it urgent to decide the case when 16.5 million citizens of India (Dalit Christians) go on suffering the crystal clear injustice & human right violation for the past 65 years. They feel they were mere Dalits before becoming Christians, and now they have become Dalit Christians.

Christian Responsibility

A person's Christian responsibility is to root out caste mentality within the Church, and also outside the Church, in the society in general. Pope Francis emphasises on the "fellowship with others" that "enables us to see them not as enemies or rivals, but as brothers and sisters to be accepted and embraced." Poverty is a scandal to the humanity that prides itself in various developments and growth. In *Evangelii Gaudium* Pope Francis warns: "Without equal opportunities the different forms of aggression and conflict will find a fertile terrain for growth and eventually explode." Inequality eventually engenders a violence which recourse to arms cannot and never will be able to resolve." Christian response does not end with what it does within itself.

Session V: Make Caste History

The paper in the session was presented by **Prof. Lord David Alton of Liverpool**. He started by stating that his limited knowledge is based on some short visits to India and on attending hearings and participating in debates in the British Parliament – most recently in support of the provisions of the Equality Act designating caste as an aspect of race and a protected characteristic. He said, Dalit is a term which derives from a Sanskrit word meaning "broken" or "crushed". 200 million Dalits in India make up one sixth of India's population and one thirty fifth of the world's population. Dalits live in 132 countries, including countries like the UK, where South Asians have migrated. He quoted some of stories taken from the Indian newspapers in the last seven days like: *Dalit woman burnt by employer for resisting rape in Bulandshahr*- India Today; *5 held for gang rape of Dalit girl near Dindigul*- The Times Of India; *Dalit woman assaulted, stripped in Hassan village*- The Hindu Dalits, *death and the fight for dignity* – DNA; *Dalit women in Haryana to march for redressal of cases of atrocities committed by upper caste men*- Two Circle; *Dalit Beaten Up for Touching Caste Hindu*- The New Indian Express; *Children protest against discrimination at school*- The Hindu; *No clean water for Dalits?*- Kashmir Times; *Sorcery slur on Dalit family*- The Times Of India;

Over 39,000 cases filed under Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes Act in 2012: Business Standard

He said that the caste system, “*must surely appear to every heart of true British temper to be a system at war with truth and nature; a detestable expedient for keeping the lower orders of the community bowed down in an abject state of hopelessness and irremediable vassalage.*” He further said that the Global Slavery Index, published in October last, confirmed that around half of the world’s slaves are in India – some 13.9 million out of a global total of 29.8 million, and that most of them are Dalits or Tribal’s. In the Hindu caste system, they are regarded as subhuman—lower even than animals and left fighting a largely unknown struggle for emancipation.

Evidence points to 80-95% of bonded labourers (the vast majority of the ‘modern slaves’ in India) being Dalits, 99% of ritual sex slaves (the 250,000 temple prostitutes known locally as Devadasi or Jogini) being Dalits, and the majority of those trafficked into brothels or into domestic servitude being Dalits or Tribal’s.

According to CNN, India’s former Home Secretary, Madhukar Gupta, “*remarked that at least 100 million people were involved in human trafficking in India*”, whether for sex or for labour. The head of the Central Bureau of Investigation said that India occupied a unique position as a source, transit and destination country for trafficking, and that it has more than 3 million prostitutes, of whom an estimated 40 per cent are children. These statistics are hugely significant: the situation in India simply must be at the heart of the global fight against trafficking.

Dr. Ambedkar, the architect of Indian Constitution once remarked that “*Untouchability is far worse than slavery, for the latter may be abolished by statute. It will take more than a law to remove the stigma from the people of India. Nothing less than the aroused opinion of the world can do it*” Ambedkar made untouchability a burning topic and gave it global significance. For the first time in 2500 years the insufferable plight of India’s untouchables became a central political question. Among untouchables themselves he awakened a sense of human dignity and self respect. He repudiated the helplessness of fate, the impotent, demoralised incapacity that insisted that everything is pre-ordained and irretrievable.

He said, Dr Ambedkar began a war against a social order that allowed caste to condemn millions to a life of irreversible servitude and social ostracism. He believed that “*the roots of democracy*” are to be found “*in social relationships and in the associate life of the people who form the society.*” He said that “*if you give education...the caste*

system will be blown up. This will improve the prospect of democracy in India and put democracy in safer hands.” He supported Britain’s war effort against the Nazis because he said it was a war between democracy and dictatorship. He linked it to the battle for the removal of caste: *“the battle is in the fullest sense spiritual...it is a battle for freedom. It is a battle for the reclamation of the human personality.”* He told his audience to *“educate, agitate and organise.”*

Ambedkar rightly perceived the negative effects which caste has on economic development – and in his booklet *“Annihilation of Caste”* he argued that caste deadens, paralyses and cripples the people, undermining productive activity by frequently denying opportunities to those with natural aptitude and through the entrenchment of servitude. Caste amounts to the vivisection of society.

Dalits constitute 40% of the global poor and are denied of DFID Funding, because they largely live in India, which simply doesn’t make the policy priorities. This becomes a new form of untouchability. In India you can’t make poverty history unless you make caste history. As we examine what has been achieved through the MDGs and the plight of the global poor the professional development agencies need to take a long hard look at the way they target poverty. As they think beyond 2015 they need to listen, rather than impose, and develop a cross thematic framework for addressing the curse of the caste system.

Session VI: Panel Discussion: ‘Beyond 2015

Clarissa Poulson who work for Triple Line Consulting started the discussion. (VODI is a grant-holder for the Civil Society Challenge Fund (CSCF) which Triple Line managing it on behalf of DFID. She said that applicants for funding to the CSCF and its successor, the Global Poverty Action Fund (GPAF), screened amongst other things for relevance, understanding of the problem and appropriateness of solution proposed. Both funds are focused on marginalised groups so Dalits are the main beneficiaries of many projects funded in South Asia.

CSCF rights-based, about raising awareness, empowering individuals and communities, building capacity of civil society and giving voice to the poor and marginalised in forums where decisions are made which affect them. There are projects focused on education, health, livelihoods and social inclusion. 12 GPAF projects in Nepal, India and Pakistan have Dalits amongst their main beneficiaries. These projects will receive over £8m of funding and are designed to reach nearly 2m direct beneficiaries and nearly 7m indirect beneficiaries through a range of projects focused on education, health, nutrition and livelihoods.

Post-2015: The panel discussion was on the post-2015 agenda and hence she provided a quick overview of the British Government's role in the international community to achieve this, and their position as the process enters its final phase. With the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) having 2015 as their target, several targets met but others not,

High Level Panel which concluded its work in May 2013 stated that we can and must eliminate extreme poverty from the face of the earth by 2030. Achieve through five big shifts:

- Leave no one behind. MDGs aimed to halve extreme poverty by 2015 (with 1990 as starting point). Achieved ahead of target but still leaves many millions in extreme poverty. HLP says END poverty by 2030.
 - Put sustainable development at core: climate change, sustainable patterns of consumption and production
 - Transform economies for jobs and inclusive growth. Economic growth the only exit from poverty so need greater focus on promoting business and entrepreneurship , education, trade etc. for everyone's benefit
 - Build peace and effective, open and accountable institutions for all: peace, good governance, responsive and legitimate institutions, rule of law, property rights, freedom of speech, open political choice and access to justice
 - Forge a new Global Partnership – Government with business, community groups, donors, local Governments etc.
- Mr. Guy Holloway [CF] presented ways in which Dalit issues would continue to be supported through the Foundation.[P.P].

Session VI: INGOs Addressing Poverty: A Much Needed Dalit Perspective

Moderator: Mr Richard Zipfel [Catholic Association For Racial Justice (CARJ)] [pictured]. **The paper was presented by Mr V.J.George**, General Secretary of DALITAID-India and General Convener of National Council of Dalit Christians [pictured]. He started explaining the 'Dalit Perspective'. He said that in A genuine analysis of the cause of poverty was lacking in our hitherto approaches to tackle poverty, instead of addressing the symptoms of poverty.

He quoted the Policy Paper of DFID which says 'caste causes poverty and gets into the way of poverty reduction'. In the context of South Asia, roughly 80% of the poor are Dalits, whose poverty is due to the centuries old caste system and the alienation and marginalisation caused by the caste system.



[Mr. V.J.George, speaking, Dr. Kumar Prasad and Mr. Richard Zipfel on dias]

The educational institutions run by Christians often give importance to the catechism but neglect the greatest social issue in Indian Church—the caste system. He also referred to the findings of Justice Ranganath Misra and Dr. Sathish Deshpande speaking about the permanent nature of caste irrespective of religion. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2013 has accepted caste and discrimination faced by Dalits on the basis of caste as the theme of the WPCU 2013.

Dalits form 1/3rd of the Global Poor and hence they have the right over 1/3rd of the global resources for poverty alleviation. This notion has to be accepted by the international donors bi-lateral and multilateral. In this regard the lead has to be taken by the Church based institutions (donors) by making a starting as well as by sensitising others.

Dalit Organisations in India have come forward to form a consortium to address this wrong direction in channelling the global resources for addressing the poverty of Dalits. To many, Dalits are just an object of study or target recipients of charity and are incapable of starting their own initiatives.

DALITAID has conceptualised a model development project to be implemented for the Dalit Development in India. The proposed project is an answerer to those who think that Dalits are not able to comprehend the development projects and terminologies associated with it. Under this project it is proposed to create a model township/village with facilities for livelihood (agriculture, industry, services and so on) and centres of education (elementary, technical and higher education), community living, group farming and so on. The twin approach to address caste discrimination perceived in the project is taming the lion by taking it out

of the forest and to enable Dalits to live together and strengthen themselves to fight against the caste system and discrimination which is very difficult if they live in a atmosphere of oppression and discrimination. He concluded by putting some suggestions before the Church groups, aid agencies and other Christian initiatives in UK.

Group Discussion: Delegates were divided into 4 groups and given 2 questions to discuss and report.



[Group discussion in progress]

Group questions were:

How can we pursue this issue at the same time ensuring that we do not upset the Hindu community (how to ensure minimising opposition from Hindu community and pursue our issue?)

How can we engage with Churches of different denominations?

Group 1 report was compiled by Prof. David Mosse and the group put forward many valid suggestions and opinions.

Group 2 report was compiled by Dr. Meena Dhanda.

The group strongly suggested that Caste discrimination must be presented as a human rights issue, not as an issue of religion.

Group 3 report was compiled by Mr. Maria Doss. The group came to the consensus that the churches need to acknowledge the injustice to Dalits and stand united in getting due share for Dalits.

Group 4 report was compiled by Pastor Raju Mohan Thampi.

The groups were concerned that there should be a strategic approach to build awareness, with dialogue between church denominations and discussions involving Hindu leaders.



[Conference: Group Discussions]

**Final Session: 'Ways Forward' [from the floor] –
flip charted bullet points:**

This session was an open session moderated by Mrs. Yogi Sutton, [Chair, CARJ]. Suggestions of ways forward were open to the floor. Bulleted suggestions were compiled by the moderator. Main points put forward from the floor were:



[Mr. Davinder Prasad speaking]

- 1) Need a Dalit Coordination desk and a worker.

- 2) Anti-caste legislation campaign must move to the international arena
- 3) Participation of Dalit leadership important.
- 4) Various organisations such as VODI, CastewatchUK, DSNUK, ACDA, Christian Based Solidarity Groups (CBSG), having different styles but aiming at same outcomes, should come together to raise a united voice.
- 5) Dalit focus must precede the Dalit Christian focus.
- 6) Church action should result in involvement of Dalits in leadership / hierarchy.
- 7) Develop an awareness building strategy on Dalit issues.
- 8) Indian Dalit youth must have opportunity for international exposure/ training.
- 9) The government and church leadership must be accountable for Dalits plight.
- 10) Present relationships not to be damaged by interfaith experts.
- 11) A Dalit day with prayer/workshops.
- 12) Email group created to draw more support to the groups.
- 13) Press reports given appropriately.
- 14) Dalit Liberation Sunday to be observed.

4. Full Text of Papers presented

Caste: A Global Overview:

Dr. Meena Dhanda

*(Reader in Philosophy and Cultural Politics,
University of Wolverhampton,
Email: m.dhanda@wlv.ac.uk)*



The subject of Caste divisions is vast: our capacity to deal with it, in comparison, is limited. Yet, it might aid our deliberations to begin with a snap shot of the spread, the scale and the depth of these divisions which remain a threat to all attempts to bring people together in collective struggles, be they spiritual, political, economic or social.

We cannot take anything for granted in our understanding of Caste as a theoretical concept: what caste means continues to be contested. However, challenges to the meaning of caste are not always made with fair intentions to seek clarity; sometimes these challenges to the meaning of caste are made to deny the wounds that result from it. Challengers in this country want the others to believe that caste divisions are merely constructs, not ‘really’ there. They also want others to think of them as benign, harmless, indeed some go so far as to declare caste divisions as welcome sources of solidarity. If there is undeniable evidence of caste divisions being used to discriminate, these deniers say that it is not caste per se which is to be blamed but some individual’s abuse of a position within a benign social system.

In contrast, the victims of caste discrimination point a finger at the very existence of caste divisions, which are practiced in multifarious ways. For pragmatic reasons, the campaigners against caste discrimination may not want to comment on the solidarity conferring role of caste, for solidarities can be forged by all sections: by perpetrators of discrimination as well as by the victims. For example, campaigners would welcome Dalit solidarity, which is for the removal of injustice. Yet, when solidarity is expressed by perpetrators standing together to defend members of their own caste against charges made by victims, the notion of solidarity

becomes a little suspect. What, after all, is more important: the demands of justice or of solidarity? On what basis can a counter challenge be offered to the deniers, who say that caste is harmless?

Firstly, there is the question of whether caste discrimination is systematic or merely the result of individual failings of character? Secondly, there is the harder question of what could be the basis of solidarity between people if caste is removed from its current central place in the lives of many individuals? The two questions are tied together. It is part of the deniers' argument that caste is not *central* to their identity, although the role it has is often considered as valuable, because ritual matters of life, death and progeny are tied to it. On the other hand for the victim of discrimination, as the DSN report of 2006 so neatly put in its title, there is 'no escape'. A victim, who may be free of the ritualised role of caste and may not want his/her caste to be definitive of his/her identity, might still have to live with the mark of caste because it is made so by the actions of the perpetrators. Once marked and with no escape a victim might use caste as a standpoint from which to voice protest and seek solidarity.

Now it might appear that by challenging the need for the solidarity conferring role of caste, we are undermining the victims' collective struggle, whilst leaving untouched the perpetrators caste brotherhood. This consequence is but an appearance. It can be argued that the victims' collective struggles for justice are immune to the undermining of caste solidarity because the basis of solidarity can be *expanded*. Indeed, the use of labels like – 'network' or 'alliance' or 'international' in the names of Dalit organisations signal these expanded bases of solidarity. What then should be the alternative basis of solidarity, if not caste, remains a question we must address.

In order to launch the first counter challenge to the deniers, of showing more than individual failings in the emergence of caste related atrocities, it becomes important to pick out patterns in perpetrators' actions, to study reports of events, to assemble and compare data, and, most importantly, to listen to the voice of the victims.

A lot of painstaking work needs to be done. We have made a small contribution in assessing through a review and engagement with stakeholders and experts on where we stand on caste in Britain. Our two reports accepted by the EHRC will soon be published and hopefully take the discussion forward.

The text below is a copy of the power- point slides presented on the day.

Common features of manifestation of caste around the globe

- * Acquired by birth – hereditary
- * Maintained by marriage – endogamy
- * Usually with an established stratification – between higher and lower
- * Some fluidity
- * Linked to deprivation
- * Linked to atrocities and violence
- * Linked to discrimination
- * Linked to solidarity/brotherhood
- * Linked to identity: Pride for some; Shame for others;

In South Asia

- caste division is acknowledged as a part of life;
- involves unequal access to valued resources (e.g. land and water),
- to opportunities (education and employment);
- to political power; and
- involves the humiliation of certain groups considered socially inferior:
 - * often residentially segregated,
 - * excluded from public spaces and services (e.g. temples, teashops, village wells).
 - * denied social respect.

Caste has a global structure

- It is ‘opportunity hoarding’ that shapes labour, credit, rental and other markets, access to services (health, justice); entrepreneurship (e.g., Iyer et al, 2013; Kumar, 2006; Lanjouw and Stern, 2003; Natrajan, 2012; Thorat and Newman, 2010).
- Caste has been a factor determining patterns of migration and is in turn altered by these patterns (for the UK, see Ballard, 1989; Dhanda, 2013a; Taylor, 2013).
- Globally, discrimination on grounds of caste is not strictly religious, nor ‘Hindu’; it exists among Christians, Muslims, Sikhs and other groups (Zene, 2002, O’Brien, 2012, Mosse, 2012, Singh, 2012).
- An independent Indian commission pertinently noted that caste is a ‘general social characteristic’ regardless of ‘whether the philosophy and teachings of any particular religion recognise it or not’ (Ministry of Minority Affairs, 2009: 153-54).

The spread, the scale, the depth

- In which states is caste a ground for non-discrimination?
- Is caste the subject of international treaties?
- Does caste occur in UN reports on violation of human rights?
- Is the elimination of caste-based deprivation, violence and discrimination on the agenda of international non-governmental organisations?
- What ought to be a global response to caste-based atrocities?

International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination 1965 (ICERD)

- Monitored by Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)
- In 1996, following India's report, and not wanting to single out India, CERD interpreted caste to be covered under descent in Article 1(1) ICERD.
- CERD has questioned among other States Bangladesh, Nepal, Senegal, Ghana, Mali and the Yemen, for the existence of caste or descent-based groups who suffer from discrimination.

General Recommendation 29 of CERD requires States Parties to take steps:

- to identify those descent-based communities under their jurisdiction who suffer from discrimination, especially on the basis of caste and analogous systems of inherited status, and whose existence may be recognized on the basis of various factors including some or all of the following:
 - * inability or restricted ability to alter inherited status;
 - * socially enforced restrictions on marriage outside the community;
 - * private and public segregation, including in housing and education, access to public spaces, places of worship and public sources of food and water;
 - * limitation of freedom to renounce inherited occupations or degrading or hazardous work;
 - * subjection to debt bondage;
 - * subjection to dehumanizing discourses referring to pollution or untouchability;
 - * Generalized lack of respect for their human dignity and equality.

CERD's interpretation of caste (included under descent) as one of 5 grounds in the definition of racial discrimination

- Opposed by:
 - * India
 - * Japan (*Buraku* community)
- Supported by:
 - * structures and mechanisms within the UN;
 - * the appointment of UN Special Rapporteurs;

Caste as a ground for non-discrimination in the constitutions of SAARC states

- Included
 - * Bangladesh
 - Article 28
 - * India
 - Articles 15; 16; 17
 - Also in criminal legislation (PCR 1955; POA 1989)
 - * Nepal
 - Interim 2007
 - (against its own historical *Muluki Ain* of 1854)
 - * Pakistan
 - Articles 22; 26; 27
 - * Sri Lanka
 - Articles 12(2); 12(3)
 - Not included
 - * Bhutan
 - * Maldives

Outside South Asia – Caste as a ground for non-discrimination in the constitutions

- Included
 - * Burkina Fas
 - Articles 1; 23;
 - * Mauritius
 - Article 16(3)
 - * Federated States of Micronesia (Yap constitution)

Recommends leadership roles to the previously excluded

- Not included
 - * Canada
 - * Fiji
 - * South Africa

Somalia has “occupational castes” referred to collectively as ‘Sab’ (which means low caste)

- *MA (Galgale Sab clan) Somalia CG [2006] UK AIT 00073*
- In this case, the appellant belonged to the Galgala clan described as ‘caste group’, ‘a low status group who perform tasks such as slaughtering animals and making shoes’, ‘especially known as wood carvers’
- (the appellant’s appeal in respect of asylum was allowed)

Evidence from India

- The Indian economist Ashwini Deshpande concludes that ‘in the last two decades of liberalisation and globalisation of the Indian economy, there seems to be scant evidence of a break in patterns of caste inequalities’
- Privatisation of education and jobs has exacerbated the disadvantages faced by Dalits: ‘Dalits are not only battling historical prejudices but are, in fact, dealing with contemporary, modern forms of discrimination’ (2011: 98-99)

Gender and caste

- Sexual exploitation at the workplace in the UK (Wilson 2006)
- Dalit women doubly disadvantaged (Deshpande 2011)
 - * Unemployment rate for SCs increased sharply in recent years
 - * Women bear the brunt of casualization of jobs

Dalit women’s protest – Janabai (1298-1350)

[Jani sweeps the floor]
Jani sweeps the floor
The Lord collects the dirt
Carries it upon His head
And casts it away
Won over by devotion,
The Lord does lowly chores!
Says Jani to Vithoba
How shall I pay your debt?

Solidarity for Dalit liberation

James Massey has argued for a Dalit theology that:

- ‘must address the Dalits themselves...must prepare the Dalits of all religions for rejecting the old Brahmanical religious order which has perpetuated their captivity’ (1997: 63)
- ‘must also address non-Dalits...to make others aware of the suffering’
- ‘must challenge the church to change’
- ‘enable ordinary Christians to take an active role’
- ‘create the possibility of fuller liberation’ (1997: 64)

Massey reminds us of Ambedkar’s criticism of the Christian missionaries whose money and energy are ‘misapplied’ and ‘does not help the Indian Christians’, because:

- Education and medical relief mostly benefit the high-caste Hindus
- The Indian Christians need two things: protection of civil liberties and ways and means for their economic uplift.

5. Caste discrimination and prejudice has no place in 21st Century Britain

The Right Reverend Lord Harries of Pentregarth



Caste discrimination in the UK today

Despite the fact that many people of South Asian origin have left their home countries and are highly educated, caste tends to stay within the South Asian Diaspora wherever they may settle. According to the 2011 Census figures of for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (not Scotland) the South Asian population is in the region of 4.2 million or 4% of the total population. It is impossible to say with certainty how many of these people are Dalits as detailed research of this nature is lacking, but it is accepted that there is a significant ‘population pool’ of Dalits, numbering up to 400,000 (or 10%) and spanning the various sub-continental religions. This is a conservative estimate as the percentage of ‘scheduled-caste’ (the legal term used in India to identify those formerly known as ‘untouchables’) people in India is known to be 16.3%, but this only refers to the Hindu, Sikh and Buddhist populations and does not encompass the Dalit Christians or Muslims. In India Dalits make up to 80% of Christians.

While individuals of Dalit origin and their descendents in the UK no longer pursue the culture-specific menial ‘polluting’ occupations traditionally associated with their caste status, the ‘untouchability mindset’ persists in the form of direct and indirect discrimination. Ancestry is identified in a number of ways, including on the basis of name (although names may be changed), place of origin, former occupation, family members’ occupations, place of worship, education, social circle and on the basis of community knowledge. Therefore it is of little surprise that such a deeply entrenched form of discrimination also exists within the Diaspora communities in the UK – a fact that must be a cause for concern for those who seek equality and justice.

In 2006, the first report into British caste discrimination entitled “No Escape: Caste Discrimination in the UK” was published by the Dalit

Solidarity Network UK. This study revealed that 50% of *Dalits* found themselves to be identified by their caste, and 85% of all those questioned believed that Indians “actively practised and participated in the caste system”. A 2009 study commissioned by Anti Caste Discrimination Alliance researched attitudes and perceptions of caste discrimination among the South Asian community in Britain. Of the 300 people questioned, 71% identified themselves as *Dalits*, and a shocking 58% claimed to have experienced some form of caste discrimination. The manner by which people had experienced this prejudice varies; with around 45% having experienced negative or discriminatory treatment in the workplace (mostly from colleagues), and 16 percent facing verbal abuse in school when under the age of twelve. A disturbing statistic also indicated that 10% of the caste discrimination that under-12s had experienced allegedly came from school teachers.

In 2010 the House of Lords passed an amendment to the Equality Bill empowering the British government to include ‘caste’ under the protected characteristic of ‘race’. The provision in Section 9(5) was passed by the Commons on April 6 2010 and the Equality Bill was granted Royal Assent on 8 April. The purpose of the Act was to consolidate and include a complex raft of equality legislation prohibiting discrimination on various grounds.¹

Baroness Thornton, speaking for the then Government, told the peers, “We have looked for evidence of caste discrimination and we now think that evidence may exist, which is why we have now commissioned the research.”

According to Section 9 (5) of the Equality Act 2010 “A Minister of the Crown may by Order amend this section so as to provide for caste to be an aspect of race” should evidence be found that caste discrimination in the areas covered by the Equality Act 2010 was taking place in the UK

Following the passage of this provision, the Labour Government commissioned the National Institute of Economic and Social Research to investigate the extent of caste-based discrimination and harassment in the UK. Their findings can be read here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/85523/caste-discrimination.pdf

The research published in December 2010 found evidence of caste-based discrimination, including in the area of work – particularly in terms of bullying, recruitment, promotion and task allocation.

¹*Hansard*, 11 May 2009, Column 553 (Second Reading Speech)

The report concluded that the Government may take either educative or legislative approaches to address the challenge of caste discrimination in the UK. However, it also stated that non-legislative approaches are less likely to be effective in the private sector and do little to assist those where the authorities themselves are discriminating. The report also found that Equality Act 2010 provisions on religious discrimination cannot cover caste discrimination and harassment as effectively as caste-specific provisions would.

The NIESR report concludes: *“Thus, discrimination legislation through the Act with the exercise of the caste power ought to reduce the extent of caste discrimination and harassment which occurs ... make it easier to address caste discrimination within the organisation when it does occur ... and provide an independent means of redress when these approaches are unsatisfactory.”*

The Equality and Human Rights Commission also supports amending the statutory definition of race to include caste:

“The Equality and Human Rights Commission supports the enactment of Section 9 (5) of the Equality Act 2010, which provides that a Minister may by order amend the statutory definition of race to include caste and may provide for exceptions in the Act to apply or not to apply to caste.”

“The Commission notes the findings of the government-commissioned National Institute of Economic and Social Research [1] paper on caste discrimination. In light of this, the Commission would suggest legal protection under the Equality Act 2010 for those experiencing discrimination in Britain should be as comprehensive as possible.”

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/legal-and-policy/equality-act/commission-policy-statement-on-caste-discrimination/>

After 3 years of waiting for a Government response to the NIESR research, Lord Harries of Pentregarth tabled an amendment to the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Bill, which would activate Section 9 (5) of the Equality Act 2010, and add caste as an aspect of race under Section 9(1).

The amendment in March 2013 read as follows

Insert the following new Clause—

“Equality Act 2010: Caste discrimination

The Equality Act 2010 is amended as follows.

After section 9(1)(c) (race) insert—“(d) Caste;””

In a major parliamentary stand-off, the House of Lords voted twice for legal protection to be given to Dalits who live in the UK. On April 16, Commons MPs overturned the first Lords vote, sparking a tug-of-war between the two Houses. But after the Peers again backed the proposals on April 22, it forced the government to re-think. Hence a remarkable victory for the Dalits and the campaigners who have worked alongside them for many years in an eleventh hour change of heart from the Government, as it agreed to ‘activate’ the Ministerial power to provide for ‘caste to be an aspect of race. Furthermore this power was to be used within two months of the enactment of the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Bill (received Royal Assent on 29 April 2013)

Using the power contained in Section 9(5) will provide an **absolute clear rule** that people cannot be discriminated against because of their Caste and we will have the clarity of law required once the legislation is enforced.

This will also help bring about the change in behaviours (as Equality Law has done in the areas in the past for example on race and sexual equality) covered by the Equality Act 2010. Caste discrimination law will send out signals (like with drink driving and race). It is not simply about prosecutions, it is about people modifying their behaviour and making it unacceptable. This will only happen when people realise it is against the law. We will not change mind sets in the short term, but hopefully by changing behaviours we will help to educate the mind too.

Some case studies similar to the ones identified in NIESR’s report to illustrate how caste discrimination may and do manifest itself in the UK, taken from personal testimonies in the Anti Caste Discrimination Alliance report *Hidden Apartheid: Voice of the Community*.

An elderly lady in Coventry is discriminated against by her carer who considers herself a higher caste, when the carer refuses to bathe or ‘touch’ her. As a result her care is neglected and she is not treated with dignity and respect.

With Caste one of the protected characteristics under Race, the family have some recourse to justice under the provision of goods and services, whereby the care may improve as a result of problem being highlighted. But if it does not, the elderly lady can take her case to a lawyer to argue that her neglect is because of her and her carer’s caste.

A teenage girl in London is constantly being bullied and being taunted by caste names. This affects her academic achievements and health and wellbeing

This teenager or her parent can formally report the bullying and the impact it is having on them to the school. The school deals with the caste-related bullying like it does other equality issues under the Equality Act because caste is a legally recognised form of discrimination.

A bus company manager in Southampton who is white English has to change the shifts rota so that a Dalit Bus driver only works with a Dalit bus conductor. This is because the so-called higher castes refuse to work with Dalits on same shift.

Legal protection here will ensure that employers and the workforce know that this form of discrimination is not acceptable under the law i.e. the same adjustments to the working practices would not be expected to be made with regard to age, sex, or disability. The bus company manager will be able to argue that by not choosing to work with a particular caste is not legally acceptable in the work environment. If the case is not resolved internally, the bus conductor could seek resolution via the Tribunal or Courts route.

Real time Case study: The Begraj case

In a landmark case, an Indian couple belonging to different caste groups became the first in Britain to claim 'caste' discrimination in the court system. Vijay Begraj, a former practice manager at the Coventry solicitors firm Heer Manak, and his wife Amardeep, a former solicitor at the same firm, are contesting their case at a Birmingham employment tribunal.

After developing a relationship at the firm the two decided to marry. They claim that they have been discriminated against by senior colleagues from the firm, because he is a Dalit, and she is from a 'higher' caste. When they announced they were to marry Amardeep Begraj claims that one senior colleague told her to reconsider because people from the Dalit caste were 'different creatures'. She was then burdened with more work and paid less than equally or lesser qualified solicitors in the firm, she says. According to Vijay Begraj, their decision to get married led to harassment, denial of promotion and, ultimately, his dismissal in 2010 after seven years of employment; his wife resigned in January 2011. They are now claiming wrongful and constructive dismissal, respectively as well as discrimination because of religion and race. As there was no caste legislation in place at the time of their tribunal, the allegations do not refer specifically to caste although Vijay has recorded over 100 incidences where caste discrimination played a greater part. Caste may be linked to both race and religion, but is not entirely synonymous with either.

In an unexpected twist, the case collapsed in February 2013 on a technicality and may now be subject to a retrial. The costs of which are likely to be way beyond the pockets of the Begraj's.

Caste discrimination and international human rights law

Discrimination based on work and descent, the UN terminology for Caste discrimination, is a form of discrimination prohibited by international human rights law as proclaimed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and, inter alia, by the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Labour Organization Convention No. 111.¹

The international treaties unequivocally obligate affected governments to eliminate discrimination.² Several UN human rights bodies have expressed grave concern about the persistence of Caste discrimination in various country and thematic reviews.³ Furthermore, UN treaty body committees have reaffirmed in their General Recommendations that discrimination based on Caste is prohibited by international human rights law (see also list of references at the end of this document).⁴

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) regards Caste-based discrimination as falling under the category “social origin”. The principle of non-discrimination is a core labour standard which is established in ILO Convention 111 on Discrimination (Employment and Occupation). ILO Convention 105 prohibits any form of forced or compulsory labour.

¹ Draft UN principles and guidelines for the effective elimination of discrimination based on work and descent, paragraph 4 (A/HRC/11/CRP.3)

² From RECASTING JUSTICE: SECURING DALITRIGHTS IN NEPAL'S NEW CONSTITUTION. Joint Statement by New York University School of Law Center for Human Rights and Global Justice (CHRGJ), Dalit NGO Federation (DNF); and IDSN: http://idsn.org/fileadmin/user_folder/pdf/New_files/Nepal/090223-Joint_Statement-Final_ENG_PDF.pdf

³ See compilation of all Caste-specific recommendations and observations by UN human rights bodies (Treaty Bodies, Universal Periodic Review, and Special Procedures) here: www.idsn.org/UNcompilation

⁴ See [List of references to Caste-based discrimination in General Comments prepared by UN human rights treaty bodies by CERD, HRCttee, CESCR, CEDAW and CRC](#)

A matter of growing international concern

A number of UN bodies have commented on the lack of legislation against caste discrimination in the UK. The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) has on two occasions recommended the UK government to enact a prohibition against caste discrimination. In 2011, CERD explicitly recommended that the Minister invoke the clause in the Equality Act for “caste to be an aspect of race”

In 2012, the UK was recommended to prohibit caste discrimination during the second examination of its human rights record by the Universal Periodic Review mechanism under the UN Human Rights Council. The UK Government decided, however, not to accept the recommendation.

The UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism and the former UN Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights have also taken note of the existence of caste discrimination in UK Diaspora communities.

What next?

We have clear evidence that caste-based discrimination occurs in the UK. No matter how infrequently this practice occurs, we should *not* leave those who experience it without clear protection in law. There is no place for caste discrimination in the UK. All other forms of discrimination are covered by statute – caste should be no exception. Victims of caste-based discrimination should be given a similar level of protection accorded to victims of other forms of unacceptable discrimination. People experiencing caste discrimination may, in some cases, be both the same race and religion as the perpetrators of the discrimination, making it extremely difficult seek redress via existing racial and religious discrimination laws. Including caste in Section 9 (5) provides clear protection against caste-based discrimination in law.

We welcome the Government’s decision to finally use the Ministerial power to activate Clause 9(5)(a) of the Equality Act 2010 to outlaw caste discrimination in the UK.

The operative Section 9 of the Equality Act 2010 now reads as follows

9 Races

(1) *Race includes—*

(a) Colour; (b) Nationality; (c) Ethnic or national origins.

(2) *In relation to the protected characteristic of race—*

(a) A reference to a person who has a particular protected characteristic is a reference to a person of a particular racial group;

(b) A reference to persons who share a protected characteristic is a reference to persons of the same racial group.

(3) A racial group is a group of persons defined by reference to race; and a reference to a person's racial group is a reference to a racial group into which the person falls.

(4) The fact that a racial group comprises two or more distinct racial groups does not prevent it from constituting a particular racial group.

(5) A Minister of the Crown

(a) Must by order amend this section so as to provide for caste to be an aspect of race.

(b) May by order amend this Act so as to provide for an exception to a provision of this Act to apply, or not to apply, to caste or to apply, or not to apply, to caste in specified circumstances.

(6) The power under section 207(4)(b), in its application to subsection (5), includes power to amend this Act.

However, while the newly drafted Section 9 imposes an obligation on the Secretary of State to make caste an aspect of race, it doesn't say when this is to happen. The commencement of the relevant provisions of the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act two months after Royal Assent merely triggers the obligation without giving a time limit on it, but the Minister in the Commons, Jo Swinson MP, indicated that one to two years was the right ball-park for the necessary consultations on the definition of caste and the drafting of guidance to stakeholders¹.

The additional references to the Equality Act in Subsections 6-10, dealing with the review which is to be carried out five years after Royal Assent, remain part of the Enterprise and Regulatory and Reform Act.

(7) A Minister of the Crown-

(a) May carry out a review of the effect of section 9(5) of the Equality Act 2010 (and orders made under it) and whether it remains appropriate, and

(b) Must publish a report on the outcome of any such review.

(8) The power under subsection (5)(a) may not be exercised before the end of the period of 5 years beginning with the day on which

¹ Official Report April 23, col 796

this Act is passed (but may be exercised on more than one occasion after that).

(9) If a Minister of the Crown considers it appropriate in the light of the outcome of a review under subsection (5), the Minister may by order repeal or otherwise amend section 9(5) of the Equality Act 2010.

Our concerns now lie with the Government position to undertake a consultation period of between 1- 2 years. This would be unprecedented with parliaments' own consultation guidelines recommending a 12 week period except in exceptional circumstances.

This effectively kicks implementation into the long grass. We feel that whilst education has a place, it cannot and should not take the place of legal redress. Legislation will help to change behaviours; education will help to change mind sets, but only when it is clear that certain behaviour is against the law. Statutory protections in law, alongside wider education, would help those authorities who are responsible for ensuring equality, to recognise and address the challenge of caste-discrimination.

There is no problem with a consultation period – and in fact it is welcomed. The anti-legislation lobby are holding to the fact that it is a direct slight on their religion. It is not – and perhaps if drafted well and is fully inclusive, a consultation would expose this and begin to allay fears.

The conclusion that caste discrimination occurs in the UK was unequivocal. The Government has suggested a 'review' of this evidence, but there has been no clear indication of what they believe has changed since the NIESR research was conducted, what was missed out in the original research, or what other areas such a review should cover.

We have always held that caste discrimination is not religion specific – it affects all religious groups and those who hold no particular faith. The enactment of Section 9 (5) is therefore not intended to target any specific religious community, but simply to provide clearer protection in law for those who experience caste-based discrimination. The legislation will protect many thousands of UK citizens from a form of discrimination that is blight on the UK's firm belief in 'Equality and Dignity for All'.

6. Caste Discrimination in UK [Community Voice]

Mr. Davinder Prasad

General Secretary, CastewatchUK



CasteWatchUK: Fighting for Caste Equality in UK

CasteWatchUK is an independent, voluntary organisation registered with the Charity Commission. Our main aims are to raise awareness of Caste discrimination in the United Kingdom (UK) and to strive for appropriate legal, social and democratic remedies. Since its formal launch in July 2004, CasteWatchUK has worked on a broad front, to raise awareness of caste-based discrimination in the UK. We sought consultation with the Department for Education & Skills; provided input into consultations on the Home Office’s White Paper *Strength In Diversity*; provided feedback to the government’s Community & Faiths Unit and made submissions to the Discrimination Law Review in early days of our campaign for caste equality. We have been lobbying British Government and Parliamentarians since 2004 that enabled us to get caste included in section 9(5) of Equality Act 2010. We also played a key role in research carried out by NIESR - National Institute for Economic & Social Research – “Caste Discrimination & Harassment in Great Britain”. CasteWatchUK again played a key role in 2013 when lobbying MP’s and Peers in Houses of Parliament during the passage “Enterprise & Regulatory Reform Act 2013”. We got success when Government finally conceded to our demand for including “Caste” in Equality Act 2010. Caste legislation is still waiting to be formally implemented by British Government and our campaign to make caste discrimination in UK is still on.

We have also networked with a number of community groups, faith groups, human rights groups, academic institutions, trade unions, voluntary & statutory organisations and continue to raise the profile of Caste based discrimination and its impact on British society. We continue to lobby the social and political classes in the United Kingdom & provide a public

platform to victims of Caste discrimination through personal contacts, educational institutions and community groups. We organised a number of conferences since 2003 in various cities in this respect giving effect to concerns raised, including a most important conference called “Caste Discrimination & British Law” held in November 2008 the UK Parliament.

Caste Away Arts (www.casteawayarts.com) is the artistic wing of CasteWatchUK and has been an invaluable help in campaigning for equality, human rights and breaking down social barriers through theatre. They have successfully managed to shed light on issues that aren't normally talked about, particularly in the British-Asian community, by including true stories in their work. Caste discrimination in the UK can be seen in temples, schools, places of higher education, community centres, social clubs, places of employment and services in the UK where people from Indian and Pakistani Diaspora are working, resulting in caste based bullying, leading to inferiority complex and low self esteem in victims. This maltreatment prevents victims from achieving their full potential and making their due contribution to British society. Caste Away Arts has written a stage play called “The Fifth Cup”- based on true life experiences of caste discrimination collected from research conducted by CasteWatchUK and Caste Away Arts. The Fifth Cup has been successfully staged in London, Birmingham, Southall and Leicester. The performances with packed audiences were a clear signal of the power of the play in highlighting the devastating effect caste discrimination has on its victims and urgent need for finding solutions.

Since the advent of CasteWatchUK and the subsequent public debate that we unleashed, the Hindus specifically have accused the Christians of proselytising a particular sections of the Hindus. In each and every media broadcast, press releases and hurriedly conducted Caste debates, conferences, seminars and Research Reports, the Hindus did not miss a single opportunity to bring this aspect to the forefront going to the extent of accusing CasteWatchUK of being manipulated by Christians for their conversion agenda. Hindus have now to thank themselves that Indian Christians have awakened to the ground realities of Caste. The Indian Christian community now feels that it should express its abhorrence of the Caste System and related prejudice. The community feels challenged by prevalence of Caste notions and wishes to air its grievances in public forums. Being a secular organisation, CasteWatchUK has an overarching theme to raise awareness of Caste based discrimination. We are happy to provide a platform to any community that wishes to raise issues relating to caste without promoting a particular religion, sect or creed.

The objective of this conference, unashamedly, is to mobilise communities so that the legal apparatus of this country does not lose sight of the prevalence of Caste prejudice and that Caste is seen as a menace to social harmony in Britain. The Indian Christian community has felt marginalised especially in the context of atrocities committed on Christians in India. This is an effort by CasteWatchUK to enable the Indian Christian community to raise Caste as an issue affecting the Christian Community and demonstrate its unequivocal abhorrence of Caste practices and Caste unacceptability in modern Britain.

It is unfortunate that decades of exposure to British Values has failed to change the rigid caste prejudiced mindset of British Hindus. Community groups that are victims of caste discrimination, are disappointed with Hindu opposition to our campaign for rooting out caste discrimination from British Society. Instead of joining us in promoting social equality and community cohesion, Hindu organisations have published fabricated reports suggesting that Christians are responsible for stirring up the caste problems in UK. Reluctance to accept their social responsibility and denial of caste discrimination practices, which even their reports suggest go on in the UK, aggravates the seriousness of the situation. Change in the “Anti Discrimination Law” by inclusion of “Caste” in the Equality 2010 is the first step and the only sure way of ensuring that human rights of British Citizens, irrespective of their caste background, are not undermined by any one in British Society.

7. Testimony: Mr. Maria Doss

My experience of caste discrimination

I am grateful to VODI for being here in London, otherwise it is not going to be easy for any Dalits to come here for studies. Personally I have not directly faced any caste discriminations but they might have discriminated behind my back as I was senior supervisor in the Ealing Hospital for 9 years. Or they may not have realised who I was. In my experience I have witnessed caste consciousness and discrimination among the staff and the colleagues because more than 80% of them were Punjabi Indians. Among the supervisors there was another senior supervisor who is a Dalit and another from dominant caste. He was always after the lady supervisor harassing her, intimidating her, provoking staff against her and in one incident he wrote in all the lifts, toilets and public place 'xxxx chamar'. He even told me and others physically how she is dark and comes from low class and caste. It was humiliating for her and she was crying. I tried to take up the matter to the management but they were indifferent and tried to hush up the matter. The treatment she got from her staff were horrible. They openly called her 'kuthi' (dog). They even told her if she goes to her house back home she cannot even sit equally on a chair and she has to sit down. This caste consciousness, caste name calling, ignoring her orders, not cooperating goes on still and is in any work place where there are more Indians. Caste discrimination is a reality even in the UK but hidden and people are shy or afraid due to the effect on their children.



In my experience, I was in the Roman Catholic Church, aspiring to be a priest. After almost all studies of 11 years I was forced to leave due to the years of caste discrimination from authorities and colleagues who were all non - Dalits and they hated my gifted talents and commitment. They would call their caste names openly in front of me, knowing that I cannot say I am a paraya. It is so infested with caste consciousness so I call it as Roman Casteist church. I got so suffocated and delaying my ordination was the final discrimination. So I had to leave. I have not forgiven them still, so I want to commit to eradicate caste within the Church first. The systematic elimination of Dalit candidates from priesthood has to be questioned.

8 . Freedom of Dalits and Dalit Christians in Independent India:

Pastor. Raju Mohan Thampi

(Chairman, Asian Minorities Church)

My paper is on Freedom of Dalits and Dalits Christians in Independent India and I quote Dr Ambedkar on his significant speech about the future of democracy in India.

He has apprehension about the future of democracy because he had foresight about the adversaries of democracy with their Caste prejudices. Caste practitioners and proponents in the form of Hindu religion use Caste discrimination and Caste violence, destroying the very notion and social fabric of democracy.



We, as organisations involving in the social freedom struggle for Dalits and Dalit Christians and all religious Minorities, do agree with Dr Ambedkar's vision and findings. We emphasise and urge the International Community to raise collective voices against the schemes and plans of the enemies of Indian Democracy and the Constitution. Also to reinstate an Indian Government's commitment to establish social democracy as the foundation of political and economic democracy.

As Caste based discrimination, atrocities and violence against Dalits and Dalit Christians have been escalating more than the pre-Independence period, it is imperative that the Government recognises that it has failed to protect Dalits and religious minorities in India. It is very dangerous to note that Central Government and in some of the States have been taking a lethargic attitude towards Caste discrimination and atrocities against religious minorities. This itself is evidence that the Government of India and rulers from time to time have not taken effective steps to eradicate Caste based atrocities.

We, from our understanding are convinced that Dalits should be given separate settlements: sheltered villages and townships in every state. There should also be state and centre level discrimination / atrocities monitoring centres established which can provide 24 hour service to Dalits and religious minorities in India.

We also understand that the United Kingdom has had a long standing history of giving refuge to millions of people who have been adversely affected by social, political and natural calamities / disasters, war and atrocities. We request the International Christian Community to campaign for providing refuge in the UK for those Dalits and Dalit Christian who have been affected by / undergone Caste based atrocities, violence and discrimination, which disallows them to practice their faith in India.

We are very thankful to the Christian Network Against Caste Discrimination for its strong commitment to raise international voices against all forms of discriminations and atrocities against religious minorities in South Asia.

Thank you very much for giving me an opportunity to present my short paper at this International Conference.

9. ‘Dalit Struggles, Within and Outside’

Paper 1: Solidarity Work with and for Dalits

Rev. David Haslam,

(*Dalit Solidarity Network UK [DSNUK]*
Founding Trustee)



First are some reflections on what solidarity work means, and then some examples of what has been done. **I see three stages in solidarity work. The first is Awakening.** For me this was a sabbatical journey through India in late 1997. It was arranged with help from Christian Aid and the newly-formed National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights. The chief organiser for my visit from the NCDHR was Paul Divakar, I remember him asking me the first time we met if I had heard of Dr. Ambedkar. I had to say no, with a sigh he asked if I had heard of Gandhi. I said yes, and he told me Ambedkar was the Gandhi of the Dalits. He then asked what I knew about caste. I thought caste was a hangover from the British Raj but soon learned it was much older than that. From my visit which started on the north-west border of India with Pakistan, and extended via Delhi and Mumbai to Chennai and Madurai, I learned a great deal in seven short weeks. Realising there was no real information about caste, especially for the churches, I wrote ‘Caste Out’ which was published by the Council of Churches in 1998.

The second stage is **Responding.** Having learned about caste discrimination I used my experience from the Anti Apartheid Movement to initiate some further education and campaigning. There were many parallels, caste is not the same as apartheid but similar actions could be taken from outside the country to put pressure on the authorities to take more action. I found a few other interested people in the churches and agencies, and in 1999 we set up the *Dalit Solidarity Network UK*. We adopted the principles of solidarity, listening to the oppressed, dialoguing with them as to what from outside we might do, carrying out agreed actions and then reflecting on the results. It was early days. Some agencies were aware of the issue but felt there was little they could do

about it. We also asked to see the Government ministers responsible for Asia, at that time with a Labour Government the first Minister we visited was Peter Hain. I had known him from AAM days so was able to make the connections at once. Pressure from inside allied with pressure from outside could create a 'pincer movement' which might have results. We saw several Ministers who followed him, including Ben Bradshaw and Kim Howells, and had to educate each one on caste.

Through NCDHR we also found colleagues in Europe, in particular Rikke Nohrlind from Danchurchaid who had also been an anti-apartheid activist and knew the principles of international campaigning. We formed the *International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN)* in March 2000, at a meeting at Christian Aid HQ, at Inter Church House. Others who joined then or soon afterwards included Brot fur die Welt (Germany), CCFD (France) and India Committee (Netherlands). We learned there was to be a World Conference against Racism in Durban in 2001 and NCDHR organised to get over 150 Dalits there. DSN/IDSN co-ordinated the presence of a dozen European activists, and caste got on to the international scene as a human rights issue really for the first time. The IDSN then began to develop work with the European Institutions, and again we had to go through an educational process with MEPs and EU officials, but over the years they have become very much better informed, despite resistance from India. We also after Durban developed work with UN agencies, especially the then UNHCR, the ILO and the World Council of Churches.

Thirdly came Broadening and Deepening the work. DSN UK raised funds for a part-time worker, with support from some agencies such as Methodists for World Mission, Christian Aid and Anti-Slavery International who provided an office. Links were made with Action Aid, CAFOD and Oxfam; some of these were more supportive than others. Oxfam was particularly hard work. We made links with some trades unions. UNISON gave support and we made contact with its Black Workers' Group. We got closer to a few politicians, in particular Jeremy Corbyn who was very committed on human rights and eventually became Chair of DSN, and also Lord Harries, former Bishop of Oxford, who eventually agreed to set up an All Party Parliamentary Group on Dalits. We worked from time to time with other groups, firstly VODI and later Castewatch, and also ACDA, the Anti-Caste Discrimination Alliance.

Another direction we opened up was to raise caste discrimination with companies and banks who were expanding in India. We used the same tactic as in Anti Apartheid days, using small shareholdings to attend Annual Meetings and ask questions on what the company was doing about caste in India and other countries of South Asia, and could we meet to discuss it with them. Their public relations had improved from

Anti Apartheid days, when they wouldn't talk to us, and they often said yes. The particular success was with HSBC which over two or three years picked up quite actively on the issues, and agreed to a visit which DSN had to pay for but in which they took us around their activities in India and facilitated meetings with their top directors. I insisted on taking the General Secretary of the NCDHR Vincent Manoharan with me, to make it clear that we worked very closely with Dalit organisations, we would not have any meetings without them being present. We also encouraged the Methodist Church Central Finance Board to take up this issue with companies and they have developed a Policy Paper which other church and charitable investors could use.

On the international level DSN UK was a key partner in IDSN. IDSN gained acceptance by careful lobbying in the European Commission and various UN bodies such as the UNHCR, CEDAW (women), the Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and the Special Rapporteurs on Racism, Housing, Water, etc. There was continual resistance by India, especially against CERD for classifying caste as race. We lobbied for two years to get India to present its report to CERD, which was already eight years late, and when they did so in 2006 we briefed the Committee experts as to what was really going on. They gave the Indian officials a hard time. The UN described caste discrimination as 'discrimination by work and descent', and using that definition we also widened the range of countries we lobbied on, to include Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh (all similar patterns to India), Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Mali, Yemen and even Japan (the Burakumin).

Highlights of recent years.

In 2007 Christian singer/songwriter Garth Hewitt went to India with Christian Aid and made a CD called *The Dalit Drum*, which sold well over the next few years.

In March 2009 the World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation brought together a long-held plan and organised the Global Conference on Justice for Dalits in Bangkok, Thailand. This saw participation from church representatives and Dalit leaders from a range of countries, and issued a comprehensive *Call to the Churches* to address caste discrimination which is still available on the WCC and LWF websites, and still outlines very clearly what should be done, especially by Churches, to address caste.

The National Council of Churches of India then called a Conference in New Delhi in October 2010 which declared caste discrimination a sin, much as the South African Council of Churches did with regard to apartheid. A number of church leaders were there but it was clear this

was something of an embarrassment to some of the Bishops who did not respond.

One result of this Conference was the setting up of the Churches' Dalit Support Group in the UK, which has sought to bring together church representatives at national and local level who are concerned about caste discrimination. It is sponsored by the Methodist Church and has met about three times a year since and though not very effective it keeps the concern about caste before at least some in the Churches.

Another result of the preparation for the WCC/LWF Conference was the book *Dalit Theology in the 21st Century*. This collection of essays, edited by Dr Sathi Clarke, Deenabandhu Manchala and Philip Vinod Peacock was published by Oxford University Press, New Delhi.

Finally IDSN activity continues and its lobbying assisted in a powerful resolution passed by the European Parliament in October 2013 referring again to the *Draft Principles and Guidelines on the Elimination of Caste Discrimination* which would have been published by the UNHCR some time ago without vigorous lobbying against this by the Government of India.

The struggle often seems like pushing a snowball up a hill, the nearer you get to the top the harder it gets. However there are glimpses of light and causes for optimism, and it is always important to remember how long the struggles against slavery, colonialism and apartheid were. It may well get worse before it gets better, but who even in the mid-1980s thought Nelson Mandela would walk free by the end of the decade and become President of a free South Africa in 1994.

Paper 2: Struggle of Dalit Christians within and outside the Church

Prof. Dr .M. Mary John¹

(*Chairman, National Council of Dalit Christians (NCDC),
President, Dalit Christian Liberation Movement (DCLM)
Chennai, India.*)



He is one of the founding leaders and the president of the Dalit Christian Liberation Movement (DCLM) formed in 1990 to combat casteism in the Catholic Church and secure equal rights to Dalits. He is also one of the founding leaders and the National President of the National Council of Dalit Christians (NCDC) formed in 2006, for taking up struggles against the religion-based discrimination by the state against Dalit Christians and to secure the SC rights to them. He has led several delegations to the Catholic Bishops Councils of India (CBCI) and of Tamil Nadu-Pondicherry (TNBC). He has also led the DCLM delegations to the Apostolic Nuncio in India and quite recently to Cardinal Fernando Filoni of the Propaganda Fide. He is also involved in the NGO Sector, and did the Post Graduate degree in Management of NGO's in the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), London University. A Dalit educationist, he retired as the head of the Post-Graduate and Research Department of Mathematics, Loyola College, Chennai- India, a renowned Jesuit institution.

The historical problem of castes and the oppression and discrimination against Dalits in India is fairly well known to the international community in recent years. The Dalits are the erstwhile untouchables who were segregated and oppressed for more than 2 millennium and are now called the scheduled castes (SCs) in the Constitution of independent India for making special provisions of protection and affirmative action for them.

The caste issue was vociferously raised by Dalit leaders and organizations by campaigning in the UN World Conference against Racism and Racial

¹ **Prof. Dr. M. Mary John**, M.Sc., M. Phil., Ph.D.(Mathematics), M.A.(Socio)., M.Sc.(Mngt. NGOs, LSE, London)

Discrimination in 2001 in Durban, South Africa, even though the Indian Government tried to play it down. The UN Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) is even periodically monitoring the Indian government's effort in protecting Dalits from atrocities and implementing the constitutional provisions for them. Organizations like the International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN), the Voice of Dalit International (VODI), the Caste WatchUK, Dalit Solidarity Network UK (DSNUK), etc. are working with similar efforts.

The recent historic legislation by UK making caste discrimination in UK illegal, as well as resolution in the European Parliament of 28-member-states recognizing caste-based discrimination, that affects about 260 million people in several countries, as violation of human rights and an obstacle to development, have given a new focus to the Dalits.

With all these however, a section of Dalits in India known as Dalit Christians (i.e., Dalits converted to Christianity over centuries), who remain thrice discriminated, viz. by the Indian Church, State and Society, and so worse off even among the Dalits, is not getting the due attention. The oppression and discrimination suffered by them are invisible to the international community and particularly to the Vatican and other official Churches, the world Christian community and organizations. Dalit Christians are taking up struggles against these multiple discrimination. The purpose of my Paper is to specifically raise the international understanding and concern about this and emphasize the need for the World Christian community and the Universal Church to take responsibility to Dalit Christians at this juncture when they are forced to struggle in the streets on their own. Their situation within the Indian Church is of very serious nature, since there is neither an intellectual crusade nor an intense change of heart of the hierarchy, the clergy and the caste Christian community for combating and eradicating casteism and discrimination against Dalit Christians. In fact, it is only the opposite taking place. **Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the crusader of Dalits struggle for liberation, has said long back that 'nothing less than the aroused opinion of the world can abolish untouchability and caste discrimination'. This is what happened in the case of racism and the apartheid. This is very much true of casteism in the Indian Church today and this International Conference has to take a serious view of this.**

Dalit Christians are Thrice Discriminated: Dalit Christians are treated in the Indian caste society as untouchable and discriminated in the same way as the other Dalits; they live alongside the Hindu Dalits in the same segregated colonies and streets in every village. But the Indian state denied them the constitutional scheduled castes (SCs) rights and

protection solely on the basis of religion ever since 1950 when it became a Republic. A Presidential Order (SC) 1950, Paragraph 3, was promulgated which states, “no person who professes a religion different from Hinduism shall be deemed to be a member of Scheduled Castes”. This law was amended twice to extend the SC status to Sikh Dalits and Buddhist Dalits. However this religion-based discrimination by the state continues for Dalit Christians and Dalit Muslims. Dalit Christians have been taking up mass struggles against this injustice. In the past 8 years especially, the National Council of Dalit Christians (NCDC), in collaboration with the SC/BC Commissions of the Catholic Bishops Conferences of India (CBCI) and the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI), has been taking up continuous struggles. I have to bring to your attention that the Police lathi-charged and used water cannons on the peaceful rally of Dalit Christians in Delhi quite recently on 11 December 2013.

On top of these, it is most unfortunate that Dalit Christians suffer casteism and blatant discrimination and severe marginalization within the Indian Church and are left to struggle for justice here also. This conference needs to raise utmost concern about this. Dalit Christians remain stranded in the cross-roads of caste and religion. Though Dalits, they are discriminated by the state because they are Christians. Though Christians, they are discriminated by the Church because they are Dalits. In the Indian society they are treated in the same way as other Dalits. Thus their problem is of unique nature.

Roots of Casteism and Discrimination of Dalits in the Indian Church.

The history of Dalit Christians starts with the history of Christianity in India. Casteism and discrimination got rooted in the Church just as in the Indian society and there are evidence. When the Portuguese arrived in India around 1500 AD, they started the earliest conversion in Goa mainly with the Brahmin Community and some other dominant castes. The earliest Catholic Diocese was started in Goa in 1534. In the early stages European missionaries hoped that conversion of the dominant castes (commonly referred as upper castes) will automatically attract the backward castes (referred commonly as lower castes) to Christianity. But this did not happen so. In fact, the Brahmin and dominant caste converts vehemently opposed the conversion of Dalits and other oppressed castes as they did not want them to be their equals. Later on, the missionaries directly started conversion work with the Dalits, and others known as backward castes. However the caste distinction and practices took strong roots even after conversion. The foreign missionaries in fact, accommodated castes with the pretext that it is the cultural characteristic of the Indian society.

The First Provincial Council of Goa in 1567, Third Provincial Council of Goa in 1585, Fifth Provincial Council of Goa in 1606 forbade the low castes and the untouchables to join seminaries. For instance, the Fifth provincial Council of Goa 1606 said, "For the dignity of the priesthood and respect due to ecclesiastic positions, low castes should not be admitted to religious Orders. Only sons of higher Castes, for example Brahmins, Prabhus, should be ordained". The Synod instructed the Rectors of seminaries not to teach Latin to non-Brahmins. The Bull of Pope Gregory XV, "Bulla Romana Sedis Antistes," dated 31 January, 1623, acceded to the request of the missionaries to accommodate themselves to certain caste practices and usages of the new converts.

Mass conversion took place among the Dalits in the 17th and 18th centuries. For the sake of accommodating the caste division and practices, even separate missionary works were carried out among the dominant castes and the Dalits, and separate Churches were built for them. The foreign missionaries were unable to prevent these caste practices, though they wished to in keeping with the teachings of Christianity. There have been some attempts by them, but they met with stiff resistance and in some instances they were even physically assaulted and beaten up.

Historical Instances showing that Caste problem and conflicts existed from the beginning.

There were many instances in different states to show that caste problem started from the early days of Christianity in India. A few are given here.

In 1571 in the place Pallurithy for the first time separate mass was arranged for the Sudhras (oppressed and backward castes referred to as the lower castes). There were two sets of Christians, one called the "Thomas Christians"(the Brahmin Converts) and the other called the "Latin Christians"(converts from backward castes). There was the worst situation where the Thomas Christians celebrated Christmas first on 25th December and Latin Christians were allowed to celebrate only the next day on 26th December.

In Gujarat the first Christian community village was formed in 1847 and from the beginning there was the caste problem arising. There was conflict with regard to celebrating Easter Mass together with the untouchable converts.

There was the Paraiyah (Dalits) Revolution in Pondicherry in 1831, when Dalit Christians protested their segregation in the Cathedral and demanded a separate Church for themselves to avoid the insult and humiliation from upper caste Christians and it led to conflicts.

As a result of the work of the missionaries, Christian mass movements occurred in Kerala in the 19th century. But as in the case of any other parallel socio-religious movement, Christians mass movements also took place within the framework of Castes. In spite of the Western ideas of equality and the Gospel value of brotherhood, caste segregations remained within the Church, observes Gladstone..... As the mission expanded there was thought about an Indian Church. Active steps were taken for the transition from Missions to Indian Church at last from 1860. Though under the supremacy of the Western Missionaries, Indian leadership in the Church was given Emphasis. However it is important to note that Dalit Christians were excluded from the Indian leadership as a policy, and even opposed. That is how caste Christians gained the position of strength and superiority against Dalit Christians which firmly continues till today.

After the European missionaries when Indian clergy and bishops took over the affairs of the Church, caste domination became stronger with untouchability and discrimination against the Dalits reinforced. But recording these was carefully avoided by the hierarchy and the Church historians supported by them. Yet ample evidence is available.

Some Classical Cases of Caste Discrimination and atrocity against Dalit Christians

These cases are mainly with reference to the Catholic Church in Tamil Nadu state.

The village Eraiyur in Pondicherry Dioceses, a predominantly a Catholic village with Dalit and caste Catholics', is famously known for discrimination and violence against Dalit Christians. The majority are Vanniar caste Catholic's of about 20000 and Dalit catholic's are about 3000. This is one of the catholic villages from where a large number of priests and Nuns have been ordained and many of them occupying ecclesiastical and administrative position in the diocese. There have been about 60 priests and nuns ordained from this village alone. But all are from the dominant caste, except two priests so far from Dalit Catholics. It is in this land of vocation, the most oppression and violence against Dalit Christians is taking place. All forms of untouchability are practiced here. Separate places inside the Church, separate cemeteries and hearses to Dalit and non-Dalit Catholics'. The Festival car processions are not allowed to the Dalit Christians street. Their participation in the Parish council and Committees are prevented. The following two recent incidents there are enough to show the depth of the problem, the anguish and sufferings of Dalit Christians in the hands of non-Dalit Christians.

On 16-2-1999 when the mother of the only one Dalit priest from that village died, the funeral procession was denied as usual in the Main Street leading to the Church and the funeral mass was not allowed by Vanniar caste Christians. When Dalit Catholics insisted on this in support of the Dalit priest, the caste Christians started attacking them. Fearing large scale violence, they took the funeral procession through the usual side lane to the Cemetery meant for Dalits where the Archbishop preformed the last rite. Ironically, even the archbishop of the diocese could not conduct the funeral mass inside the Church.

Still more recently on 10th July 2009, the entire Dalit Catholics walked out of Eraiyur to another village 10 kilometres away after they were attacked, their houses destroyed and looted by Vanniar Caste Catholics on 9th March 2008 and the prolonged threat thereafter. This happened because Dalit Christians claimed their right in the Common cemetery and hearse, participation in the church festival, etc. There were peace committee meetings by the Revenue Divisional Officer (RDO), with the Archbishop and diocesan authorities, but peace was not restored. A case was filed in the High court and it passed an order asking the archbishop to restore equality to Dalit Catholics. But the archbishop has not taken serious steps and the matter is still pending in various courts. Incidentally, the archbishop himself belongs to the Vanniar caste resisting the Dalit Christians and he does not act strongly in support of Dalit Christian's justice.

Another village Thachur in Chengalpet diocese is also famously known for caste discrimination and atrocity against Dalit Christians. In this village Dalit Catholics and caste Catholics are almost equal in population. But still Dalit Catholics suffer here also in the same manner as described above. There is constant conflict because Dalit Catholics claimed equal seating in the Church, in the Festivals, etc. and the parish church here was locked for several years by the civil authorities. Dalit Catholics were not allowed in the common cemetery. Quite recently this led to violence on Dalit Catholics since a Dalit who died was buried in the common Cemetery defying the usual objection by the Caste Catholics. After two days a Dalit Catholic who led the burial was murdered in retaliation. This is again a village where a large number of priests and Nuns have been ordained, but all from the dominant Castes only.

Another village K.K. Pudhur, previously in the Madras-Mylapore archdiocese, witnessed clashes during 1992-93 which led to arrests of both Dalit and Caste Christians and followed with litigations. This was again because Dalit Christians claimed equal treatment. A protest demonstration was held by Dalit Catholics in the Archbishop's house.

It is to be noted that in this village Dalit Catholics form the majority, and yet there are a large number of priests and nuns from here only from the Caste Christians.

Another noteworthy instance of murderous violence is the pre-planned attack on Dalit Christian leaders by a mob of Caste Christians in the premise of the Catholic Bishop's House itself in Thanjavur diocese, Here the leaders of Dalit Christians Liberation Movement (DCLM) met the Bishop and asked for his written assurance of reservation percentage to Dalit Catholics in the diocese as per the policy declaration of the Tamil Nadu Bishops Council (TNBC). The Bishop promised to meet them and give it in the next morning. When about 10 Dalit Christian leaders entered the Bishops House the next morning, a mob of about 200 Caste Christians hiding there suddenly attacked them, hitting them severely. One leader was almost beaten to death and he was saved after 3 months treatment in the Hospital. There was a mass protest against this by Dalit Christians, but the Bishop did nothing about it.

Such above incidents are themselves a testimony for the Caste oppression and discrimination prevalent in the Indian Church. Two startling features need to be observed from these incidents. One is that, in those villages from where large numbers of caste priests and nuns have been ordained, most violence and discrimination takes place against Dalit Christians invariably. In these villages Dalit Christians depend very much on Caste Christians for agricultural labour and other small jobs for subsistence and they are treated almost as bonded Christians. Secondly, hundreds of priests and nuns have been promoted in these villages only from the Dominant Castes and hardly a couple of priests and nuns from Dalit Christians, even where Dalit Christians are a majority or equal in population. This clearly shows the domination of Caste in the vocation and its control over seminaries and formation houses.

Statements by CBCI on Casteism in the Church

The statement of the CBCI (Mangalore January 9-17-1978) says: "The dignity of man confers certain inalienable rights upon him, whatever be the accident of his birth. Any curtailment or, what is worse, denial of these rights is an act of injustice. Hence discrimination of any type must be part of our Christian concern. **When, unfortunately, it is practiced within the Church itself, it becomes a counter-sign to the Gospel values we profess**"

The statement of the CBCI (Kottayam 1988) says: "we are sadly aware that Christians too retain many negative aspects of the larger society of which they are a part. The scheduled castes who have joined the Church

should have found in it a community of equality and of freedom from caste oppression. But many of them feel twice discriminated against. The secular state deprives them of economic benefits on a purely religious basis. The discrimination based on caste that is rampant in the rest of society continues also among Christians. **Most Christians of scheduled caste origin are still deprived of economic opportunities, access to adequate educational facilities, leadership roles and participation in decision-making.** As in the Church so also in the country as a whole we will stand for the rights of the scheduled castes and Tribes.

The statement of the CBCI (Varanasi, March 21-28-1998) says: “The prevalence of the caste-based practice, not only in society but also in some parts of the Church in India even at the close of the 20th century, is a matter of shame and disgrace to all of us. It is a cause of sorrow and expression of our inability to live our Christian faith adequately. It is not only a denial of human dignity and equality. But also against the fundamental teachings of Christ...”

The report of the Archbishop M Arokiasamy, Chairman of CBCI Commission for Scheduled Caste / Scheduled Tribe Commission on “**Caste and Conversion**” to CBCI General body meeting at Bangalore in 1989 proved the discriminations against Dalit Christians in the Church of India. He states:

“In Tamil Nadu, in the predominantly Christian villages, the Scheduled Caste (Harijan) colony or Cheri is distinct and separate from the upper caste settlement, with all the civic municipal amenities, such as the hospital and school, being located in the area of caste Christians. The Church in the village is cruciform (cross shaped) as in most parts of Tamil Nadu. Harijan Christians are in some places required to confine themselves only to one wing of the house of God. Christians of Schedule Caste Origin (CSCO) are not allowed to assist the priest or read scriptural passages during Mass and not allowed to enter the sanctuary. They are also denied participation in the Church choir. When the sacraments such as baptism, confirmation and marriage are being administered, CSCO have to receive them only after the upper caste Christians have been administered the Sacraments. They are being discriminated even in death as they are allotted different cemeteries or a corner of the same cemetery. In some places a wall separates their cemeteries.”

Such statements are reiterated often in recent years. But, these realities are accepted and acknowledged rhetorically by the hierarchy and official Bodies of the Indian Church only as an

exercise to appease Dalit Christians and others supporting them. It is in fact, an exercise to create a face value to the Indian Church that it is very much concerned about equality and justice to Dalits. But in reality they do not have the least commitment to their own statement and the willingness and sincerity to implement any affirmative policy and programmes to change the situation. This is the condition forcing Dalit Christians to take up Public protests and mass struggles in the past two decades, to demand to equality and rights and it is their most unfortunate situation.

The present situation of Dalit Christians within the Indian Church

Caste culture remains as a systemic malaise in the Indian Church. The present situation for Dalit Christians is the continuation of the past tradition of castes which is described as follows. “But the advent of Christianity did not practice; bring any ray of light in the dark chambers of the destiny of the untouchables..... They took up the cause (Christian missionaries) of social emancipation of the lower classes as also that of the untouchables, in fact with an ulterior motive. Their interest in India was ‘trade’ and the spread of Christian faith among the service classes. The Christians were fully conscious of their own vested interests, social and political. And the socio-economic conditions of the untouchables remained stagnant and continued to be vitiated by casteism and touch- me-not-ism, up to the last hours of the British regime. Thus the Christian missionaries totally failed to eliminate caste tyranny, economic exploitation and political slavery”(Ref: L.D.R. Jatava, Social Philosophy of B, R. Ambedkar, Rawat Publications, New Delhi 1997).

This tradition continues more strongly with the indigenous clergy and hierarchy taking over the administration of the Church and has brought much worse consequences to Dalit Christians today. The hierarchy, the bishops, clergy and nuns and their administration of the institutions are mainly responsible for this, rather than the common Christians. In the absence of equal representation to Dalit Christians in all these, they could never get equal treatment in the Church. Some statistical data on the present situation will give an objective understanding of the range and depth of their marginalization within the Catholic Church. I speak mainly from the context of and the data about the Catholic Church in Tamil Nadu state, as I am directly involved in these both as a victim and as the leader of the Dalit Christian Liberation Movement (DCLM) taking up struggles for equal rights. Their situation in the Catholic Church in India is also very much the same and even worse in some states. Similar situation is common in other Church denominations also.

It is important to note first that Dalit Catholics constitute about 65% in the Catholic population in India and about 80% in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry. In Southern states like Andhra and Karnataka also, they form a big majority.

In education and employment in the Catholic institutions, particularly of higher and professional education and in English medium, Dalit students and employees are only about 8% average. These are not made accessible to them. For instance, there are only a few Catholic medical colleges in India, like St. John's Medical College in Bangalore, where Dalit Christians are not at all given any consideration in their admission policy. The representation of Dalit priests and nuns as heads of the Institutions is hardly 3%. In the post of directors, in administration and employment in the diocesan social service societies, Dalit Christian's representation is negligible. The well established and leading institutions of the Church, which have come up using Church properties and the huge donations provided over decades and centuries by the world Christian community, Organizations and official Churches, usually got in the name of uplifting the Dalits and other marginalized people, strive their best only to give the best quality education to the privileged sections and remain inaccessible to the Dalits. Also, while these institutions are keen to get all the privilege and aid from the State using the minority right, they do not follow even the least of what the state does for the Dalits by way of reservations in education and employment, financial aid, hostel facility and other support. There are some exceptions, especially the Jesuit institutions in Tamil Nadu where Dalit Catholics representation is about 25% of the Catholics admitted or employed, thanks to the Jesuit's policy of option to Dalits being implemented during the past about 20 years. Yet, it is not a fair enough representation.

In the various Committees, commissions and administrative bodies at the parish levels (except the parishes having only Dalits) and at diocese levels, their representation is meagre.

From the Catholics data published by CLARETIAN PUBLICATIONS using the Catholic Directory of India 2013 of the CBCI and the Data of Dalit Catholics from the collection of CBCI commission for SC/ST, we get the following statistics of 2013.

Catholic Cardinals	-	6 (including 1 each from Syro-Malabar & Syro-Malankara rites)
Dalit Catholic Cardinals	-	Nil (0%)
Archbishops	-	30
Dalit Archbishops	-	Nil (0%)

Catholic Bishops	-	175
Dalit Bishops	-	9 (i.e, 4.5%)
Major Superiors of Congregation	-	822
Dalit Major Superiors	-	12 (i.e, 1.5%)
Catholic Priests	-	27,000
Dalit Catholic Priests	-	1130 (i.e, 5%)
Religious Sisters	-	100,000
Dalit Sisters	-	4500 (I.e, 5%)

In Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry,

Out of 18 Bishops ... only 2 Dalit Bishops (i.e 11%)
 Out of 3 Archbishops ... none a Dalit Archbishop (i.e, 0%).

There may be only a couple of Dalit Provincials and Major Superiors.

So far, there has not been a single seminary Rector appointed from the Dalit priests.

A recent Research study by the Madras Institute of Development Studies(MIDS), a reputed Institute in Tamil Nadu, which was mandated by the Tamil Nadu Bishops Council (TNBC) and sponsored by MISEREOR, Germany, also reveals similar data. The Report was submitted in March 2003. Even this much is due to some improvements during the last two decades, thanks to the ongoing struggle by the DCLM.

From a comparison of the Indian Church and society regarding caste domination, we can say that it is much stronger in the Church. Because, in the Indian society it is about 80% of Caste people oppressing and dominating the Dalits who are about 20%, whereas in the Indian Church it is about 30% Caste Christians oppressing and dominating the Dalit Christians who are about 70%. Further, while there are constitutional protections and reservation in education and employment for Dalits is accepted by the state and the society, the hierarchy of the Church and the caste Christians are not willing to accept any such affirmative action for Dalit Christians within the Church. This explains why Dalit Christians still remain severely marginalized in the Church, though a big majority. They have to struggle a lot to get even some fringe benefits and rights.

The Vocation, Ecclesiastical and Hierarchical appointments used as a means of De-empowering Dalit Christians.

Indian Christians were ordained as priests from 1860 relaxing the supremacy of the European Missionaries in the Indian Church. There has been some rare cases ordained even before that. In fact, the Brahmin Christians of Goa and other places revolted against the domination of the European missionaries who treated them with low esteem as unfit for the vocation. Regarding this Fr. Avitabile, a Theatine, wrote from Goa in 1640: “Even though they (i.e., Indian Christians) have more than mediocre intelligence, they are regarded by the Portuguese as slaves, because of the colour of their skin. ...The reasons gathered from the Portuguese official circles by the representatives of Propaganda were: difficulties with regard to celibacy, inconstancy of character, want of firmness in the faith, intellectual deficiency and a general softness of disposition. When the Brahmin Christian priests of Goa came to hear about these accusations, they were naturally very annoyed. They represented against this to the Vatican and defended their claim for admission to seminaries.(Ref: History of Christianity in India, Vol II. Joseph Thekkadath, Church History Association of India, 1998). This has to be pointed out here because, after gaining dominance thus in the Church, the same caste priests, bishops and religious maintain such mental attitude of low esteem and cultural perception against Dalit Christians till today. Even from that time, the entry of Dalit Christians in seminaries was vehemently opposed by them. The situation has not changed much from the past as the statistical data given above clearly reveals. The struggle of Dalit Christians is very much against this traditional injustice which the Vatican needs to understand. I need to add further the following to the point.

In India, the Syro-Malankara Catholic Rite has a population of about 1 million, but it has about 9 bishops and a Cardinal. The Catholic Syro-Malabar which has a population of about 2.2 million has about 35 Syro-Malabar Bishops, and one Cardinal. The Tribal Catholics in India are about 1.2 million and they have about 20 bishops and a Cardinal. From the other dominant caste Catholics who are about 6 million, there are about 85 bishops with many archbishops and 2 cardinals. But, Dalit Catholics are about 18 million and there are only about 8 Dalit bishops, with no Dalit archbishop and Cardinal. There have been about 12 Cardinals in India so far and none from Dalit Catholics. How do we accept this? Even today, conversion to Christianity in India takes place mostly among the Dalits. Does it mean that conversion/ evangelization and vocation/hierarchical leadership in the Catholic Church are unrelated or even in contradictory proportion? How do we justify it? It is nothing but colonization of the vocation and hierarchy by the dominant castes. The Catholic hierarchy in India as well as the Vatican owe an explanation for this extreme exclusion of Dalit Catholics.

The historical note given above is important and a critical point to be noted seriously by the Vatican to understand the plight of Dalit Christians. The hegemony of the dominant caste clergy, bishops and hierarchy continues against Dalit Christians vocation, against their appointment as bishops, cardinals, provincials and superiors of religious congregations and as institutional heads, etc. It is not just the mental attitude and cultural prejudice of the Church authorities, but in fact, their calculated moves that prevent these to Dalit Christians. When questioned about the low representation of Dalit Christians in the vocation and ecclesiastical and hierarchical positions, they explain away saying that it is the call of the Holy Spirit and we have to accept. The Vatican officials also seem to go along with their explanation. But the call of God or vocation is there equally for every people and community. What the Vatican and others concerned have to understand is that, the call of the Holy spirit or God in one thing, and recruitment to seminaries and novitiates, formation training and decisions on ordination or recommendation for appointments to hierarchical and ecclesiastical positions is another thing which is done by human agencies controlled by the dominant caste clergy and hierarchy. The problem is with the latter in the case of Dalits vocation and elevation. It is not the Holy Spirit, but obviously the caste spirit here that is preventing or denying these for Dalits.

Prolonged struggle of Dalit Christians for Equality and Justice in the Church.

The problem of caste and discrimination against Dalits has been there from the beginning of the Christianity in India and Dalit Christians have been opposing. There are many historically recorded incidents of conflicts and open struggles. The emergence of the Dalit Christian Liberation Movement (DCLM) in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry states in 1990 and the mass participation of the people has been a defining moment in the Catholic Church as it raised the conscience and wide concern of the Church for the first time and initiated some process of Change. Thanks to its struggle, a Dalit catholic bishop was appointed for the first time in Tamil Nadu in 1994 by the Vatican. A few policy decisions and programmes were declared to eliminate untouchability in the Catholic Church and discrimination against Dalit Catholics.

But soon the authorities started to scuttle these effort and they follow strategies to resist implementation. The legitimate demand and assertion for justice and equal rights of Dalit Catholics is often turned into caste war by the bishops and clergy. They even misuse the civil authorities against Dalit Christians with their position of strength, the Church machinery and resources.

Even now there is a great struggle going on for the past nearly 3 years in the Catholic diocese of Sivagangai which should get the attention of the world Christianity and the Vatican. A Dalit seminarian was dismissed for no fault of his by a wrong decision of the bishop. But the bishop refuses to reverse the decision even after it is known to be wrong, saying that the decision once taken by the bishop cannot be changed. This has enraged the Dalit Christian community there, since not a single seminarian has been ordained as priest from that community during the past 25 years of the diocese history. Vocation is continually denied to them by the administration of the diocese dominated by the bishop and clergy all belonging to a particular caste. This domination continues for decades. Their struggle for justice in this case is being deliberately criminalized by the action of the bishop and his administration. They vow to suppress Dalit Christians. An overall assessment of the response of the Indian Church to the question of equality and justice to Dalit Christians clearly indicates that a protracted and a more vigorous struggle is inevitable.

Outside the Church also, Dalit Christians have to struggle against the discrimination by the Indian caste society just like the other Dalits, and against the Indian State which denies the constitutional Scheduled Castes (SC) rights to them on the basis of their religion. Many things are said about the caste discrimination and Dalits in general which equally apply to Dalit Christians also. At the same time they are denied the statutory safeguards given to other Dalits which makes their situation still worse, and calls for greater struggle. But, even in the struggle to secure the constitutional SC right from the government, the Indian Church and the bishops are not with the people. They give only a nominal collaboration. This amounts to disowning the Dalits when they face injustice.

Christian Responsibility to Dalit Christians and Caste Discrimination.

The Vatican and the world Christian community have been kept under the illusion that all is well with the Indian Church in relation to the caste question. The Indian Church authorities give only a foot-note treatment to the burning subject of discrimination against Dalit Christians and do not really focus on it as a main text in the context of casteism in the Church. So the task of speaking the truth and reality about the Dalit Christians is now forced on the victims themselves. Indeed we have started speaking in recent years.

Casteism comes in the way of Dalit Christians spiritual and civil rights in the Church. A deep and vivid understanding of the situation is necessary for those concerned with and committed to find a just and final solution to their long standing historical problem and give appropriate support to

their struggle at the ground, especially when such solution is not coming forth from the powers that be. The qualitative and quantitative nature of the prolonged and multiple discrimination has to be brought out and viewed from the victims perspective. Whatever be the historical and other reasons for casteism taking roots in the Church, these cannot be used to explain away the present unjust, and indeed alarming, situation for Dalit Christians. It has to be taken up with the sense of urgency, as Dalit Christians cannot be tolerant about these any longer just as they have been in the past. **It would be imprudent on the part of the Church hierarchies and authorities to expect them to be tolerant and it would be unworthy on the part of Dalit Christians to continue to be silent victims even today.**

The Indian Church is not going to be kind to us Dalit Christians if we cannot rise up and do things for ourselves. So, we certainly need the support of the world Christianity. We have been representing through the Apostolic Nuncio in India. Last February 2013, our DCLM delegation met Cardinal Filoni Fernando of the Propaganda Fide when he visited Tamil Nadu, as the Pope's envoy to a jubilee at Shrine Vailankanni and presented a detailed memorandum to him explaining the situation of Dalit Christians. We have yet to see the response of the Vatican.

We experience and realize increasingly that the Indian hierarchy, authorities and institutions will not take any serious responsibility unless there is some strong measure from the Vatican, the World Council of Churches and world Christian organizations. Indeed we are desperately looking forward to the mother Church and world Christians responsibility on the issue.

We the victims cannot be endlessly tolerant and passive sufferers. Our liberators themselves have become the perpetrators. So we need the outside support. As far as the Catholic Church is concerned, the silence and inaction about it on the part of the Vatican any longer will amount to approving and siding with the caste domination and discrimination against Dalit Christians. If the victims are left to be their own liberator, there is bound to be conflict and confrontation. As someone who has been in the forefront of the struggles for so many years, I am obliged to record this as a strong message in this international conference. The struggle of the DCLM, so far in low scale, should be a wake-up call. There is no point in regretting the confrontation without addressing the root cause appropriately.

The Indian Church needs to be cleansed of the caste culture to liberate Dalit Christians. It is an important and uphill task which requires the participation of the world Christianity. Combating casteism remains a task much more difficult than it was in the case of racism and apartheid. Yet, it is a historical task which this international conference could initiate.

It is important to look at or witness the painful struggles they have been taking up during the past 25 years especially, and the way the Indian Catholic Church responds to it, to really understand what the world Christian responsibility should be.

The Catholic hierarchy in India is misinforming the Holy Sea about Dalit Christians demand for justice and equality and their struggle for the same. They very skilfully hide the truth and reality of the situation, so much so our representation to Vatican gets only scant and casual attention. When we Dalit Christians approach the hierarchy and authorities reverentially and respectfully with appeals they take us for granted and continues to oppress peacefully. When we assert and demand our rights we are looked upon with suspicion, branded as rebels and trouble makers disturbing peace in the Church. That is the picture they give to the Vatican. Such interpretation by outsiders is nothing but prejudice due to ignorance about the reality.

If the Vatican is serious about justice, equality and human dignity it preaches, it should first and foremost take up the issue of Dalit Christians within the Church with great concern. It needs to change its perception of Dalit Christian issue and their struggle formed based on what has been presented (in fact, misrepresented!) by the Indian caste hierarchy, clergy and authorities. It has to listen to the victims voice.

The Catholic Church hierarchy in India is totally neglecting its response and responsibility to Dalit Christians. It is in fact indifferent, antagonistic and hostile to any change in their favour. It is so evident even from the fact that it kept absolute silence about the "Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2013" (WPCU) celebrated by the world Christian community and Churches, which was jointly declared by the Vatican (Pontifical council for promoting Christian unity) and the World Council Of Churches (WCC), just because the theme for WPCU this year was 'caste and discrimination against Dalits'. But on the other hand, it does a lot of make believe exercise to convince or appear to the world Christian community, organizations and the Vatican that it is concerned and taking care of the Dalits. This is the greatest hurdle to Dalit Christians to get the support of Vatican and the world Christian community for their rights and their struggle for justice and for their developmental initiative. So it is all the more clear that the Vatican and the world Christianity has to take greater responsibility for Dalit Christians.

The world Christian responsibility today should also come from a realization of the failure or inability of the European missionaries in the past to prevent casteism and discrimination against Dalits in Indian Christianity. The present situation offers an opportunity to take up such responsibility. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the crusader of Dalit liberations,

protested and confronted the Indian Caste leaders, caste organizations and the vested interests, but negotiated, represented and campaigned for the cause of liberation and rights of Dalits during the pre-Independence days. This resulted in a focused debate in the two Round Table Conferences in London on the question of statutory protection and political representation to Dalits, where Ambedkar advocated the cause. This culminated in the constitutional safeguards and he was able to ensure constitutional protection to Dalits, reservation in education and employment and representation in Government and Administration, not because of the Indian leaders, but because of the decisive intervention of the British government before conceding Independence. Unfortunately, these benefits were denied later to Dalit Christians by the Indian government solely on the basis of religion by a Presidential order (SC) 1950, which is another matter. But the point to make is that, it was the resolved intervention of the British Government at that time that ensured these to Dalits in spite of stiff opposition and falsehood of the Indian Caste leaders. This is a necessary lesson from the history of India's independence, which this international conference and particularly the Vatican has to take note of. It needs to be emphasized that Dalit Christians problem will not be resolved from within the Indian Church. It certainly needs the resolve and understanding support of the world Christian community, organizations and the hierarchy in the Vatican.

Some Concrete and Urgent steps from outside are necessary at this Juncture.

In the light of these situation, it is high time that the world Christian community, organizations, official Churches, particularly the Vatican, make a concerted, decisive and strategic intervention on the issues.

I wish to place some concrete suggestions on behalf of the victim Dalit Christians.

- Fighting Caste discrimination requires international support. The world Christian community need to become fully aware of the Dalit Christians issue by getting in direct contact with them and their movements. Interaction with them through international seminars/conferences will help. The world Christian community must see that their financial and other contribution given to the Church in India reaches the Dalit Christian community for their poverty eradication and development.

- So far the International Aid Agencies have been overlooking the issue of Dalit Christians. They should now recognize the uniqueness of their problem to give special importance in their policy approach and funding support. International development resource support not reaching the Dalits/Dalit Christians is a serious issue and their long standing

grievance, Christian Aid Agencies especially must see that the funds provided to the Church hierarchy, organizations and institutions reach Dalit Christians with equitable share. Monitoring in this respect is of vital importance in which Dalit Christians must be involved at all levels. Consultation with and involvement of Dalit resource persons as well as Dalit activists at the ground level will serve the purpose. Also need to have a policy approach with priority to support Dalit Christians social action to secure their rights and to the Dalit-led developmental initiatives with adequate allocation of funds.

- A Commission and a Dalit Desk in the Vatican can be created with a mandate to deal with Dalit Christian issue in the Church, to promote effective interventions by the Vatican and the world catholic congregations, till satisfactory solution is reached. Vatican as well as congregations officials, Dalit Christian leaders, priests and a Dalit bishop have to be included in these.

- Vatican's resolve to promote Dalits vocation, Dalit bishops and cardinals is necessary. Special drive and procedure have to be evolved, followed and monitored to prevent the vested interests of castes coming in the way and ensure a fair representation of Dalit Christians.

- An international conference of the world superiors/generals of religious congregations need to be organized by the Vatican at this juncture, with the participation of Dalit Christians delegation. They need to be made aware of the problem and directed to take a policy of option to Dalit Christians in the educational and professional institutions run by them.

- An audience with Holy Father the Pope to a delegation of Dalit Christian leaders is necessary at this juncture. This itself will be a strong message and a moral support to the cause and will make the hierarchy in India serious and responsible.

- There should be an international initiative to meet Pope Francis and represent to him the plight of Dalit Christians in the Indian Church. An 'International Christian Network against Caste discrimination in the Church' or 'International Dalit Christian Solidarity Network' need to be formed to continue the international initiative for Dalit Christians.

These have implications to the caste issue in the whole of the Indian Church.

At this juncture, we Dalit Christians have to tell the World Christianity today what Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the architect of the Indian Constitution and above all the towering symbol of struggle for the emancipation of Dalits told decades ago: "With justice on our side, I do not see how we can lose our battle. The battle to me is a matter of joy, the battle is in the fullest sense spiritual. There is nothing material and social in it. For, ours is a battle not for wealth or power, It is a battle for freedom. It is a battle for the reclamation of the human personality". So, needless to say that

the struggle for justice to Dalit Christians has to be as much a responsibility of the world Christianity as it is for the victims.

Finally, I thank very sincerely the organisers of this timely International Conference in London on a theme of contemporary importance and giving me an opportunity to speak on the burning issue of Dalit Christians, and also thank the participants, the bishops and clergy, the members of the House of Lords and to the academicians for their concerned presence and response.

Paper 3. Dalit Struggles, Within and Outside'

Sister Sneha Gill, Advocate,

Presentation Convent and National Council of Dalit Christians, [NCDC] India.



Greetings,
Introduction:

Executive Order which prevents Christians and Muslims of Scheduled Castes Origin (Dalit Christians and Dalit Muslims) to avail the Scheduled Castes status:- On 10.08.1950, President of India had promulgated the constitution (Scheduled Castes) order, 1950 (Constitution order 19. S.R.O.385). which says:

Paragraph No: 3. “Notwithstanding anything contained in paragraph 2, no person who professes a religion different from the Hindu the Sikh or the Buddhist religion shall be deemed to be a member of a Scheduled Caste.”

Since Christians and Muslims of Scheduled Castes Origin people are facing extreme social, educational, cultural and economic backwardness arising out of the traditional practice of untouchability, they also should be treated as Scheduled Castes par with other Scheduled Castes people who profess Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism. Whereas the above said Constitution Scheduled Castes Order 1950, Paragraph three’s religion based discrimination and the ban acts as a stumbling block to extend the Scheduled Castes privileges to the above said people in the field of education, employment, political reservation, affirmative action, welfare measures, legal protection under Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention) of Atrocities Act 1989, when these people are victimised in the society because of untouchability and so on (and for availing the Indian constitutional special provisions under Articles 16, 46, 330, 332, 335, 338, 341, 366- 24), though their Castes names are there in the Schedule of the above said Order.

On 10 July 2006 in UK Parliament, this issue was raised by Honourable. Rob Marris, Member of Parliament: Column 1520W.

Rob Marris: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if she will make representations to the Indian Government calling for Dalit Christians to be enumerated among the scheduled castes; and if she will make a statement. [80777]

Dr. Howells: Issues relating to scheduled castes are, of course, a matter for the Indian Government to take forward. However, our High Commission in New Delhi has previously raised this issue with the appropriate Indian authorities in response to legitimate UK public and parliamentary interest. We are aware from media reports that a petition was filed by the Centre for Public Interest with the Indian Supreme Court to argue that the provision to exclude Dalits who convert to Christianity and Islam from the scheduled castes is unconstitutional. This case is now due to be heard during July. We are awaiting the court's decision before deciding the nature of any further representations. Our High Commission in New Delhi is continuing to monitor the situation closely.

Present Litigation which is pending in the Supreme Court of India for getting the Scheduled Castes status to Christians and Muslims of Scheduled Castes Origin (Dalit Christians and Dalit Muslims).

For announcing the above said paragraph 3 as unconstitutional (for the extension of Scheduled Castes status to Dalit Christians and Dalit Muslims), a Writ Petition (Civil) No.180 of the year 2004 was filed in the Supreme Court of India collectively, on 22nd of March 2004 by the Centre for Public Interest Litigation & T. Franklin Caesar against Union of India (Respondent).

Related with the above said case, Joint Secretary to the Government of India, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (After taking a collective decision in the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs-CCPA meeting) via letter No. 14/6/2005-MC dated 28th September 2005 had resolved to expand the terms of reference of the National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities, constituted vide Resolution No: 1-11/2004/MC (D) dated the 29th October 2004 to add the following clause to its terms of reference as follows:

“ To give its recommendations on the issue raised in Writ petition 180 / 2004 (for granting Scheduled Castes status to convert Christian members of the enumerated castes people by deleting constitution scheduled castes order 1950, paragraph ‘3’) and 94/2005 filed in the Supreme Court of India and in certain High Courts relating to Para 3 of the Constitution

(Scheduled Castes) order, 1950, in the context of ceiling 50% on reservation as also the Christian of inclusion in the list of the Scheduled Castes (This Cabinet decision was informed to the Supreme Court of India)". After doing eighteen months study by getting twelve state Governments' recommendations (Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry, West Bengal, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Kerala, Mizoram, Sikkim, Uttaranchal), the above said NCRLM had submitted the following recommendation to Union of India on 21-05-2007. It had very clearly recommended to Union of India for deleting the Constitution (Scheduled castes) order 1950, Paragraph 3.

NCRLM Report volume I, page 154, part 16.3.5 declares as follows:

"In view of what has been said above, we recommend that Para 3 of the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) order 1950, which originally restricted the scheduled caste net to the Hindus and later opened it to Sikhs and Buddhists, thus still excluding from its purview the Muslims, Christians, Jains and Parsis etc. – should be wholly deleted by appropriate action so as to completely de-link the scheduled caste status from religion and make the scheduled castes net fully religion – neutral like that of the Scheduled Tribes."

NCRLM Report volume I, page 141, Sub division 'a'

"So the Presidential Order of 1950 is unconstitutional and it is a black letter written outside the constitution introduced through the back door by an executive order. Para 3 of the presidential order is anathema which disfigures the beauty of the written Constitution of India."

Concerned with the above said litigation, as per the direction of the Supreme Court of India, both the National Commission for Minorities and the National Commission for Scheduled Castes were considered as Co Respondents along with Union of India. On 18.07.2012, the Co Respondent, National Commission for Minorities' Affidavit was filed in the Supreme Court of India, which says:

"That the Commission again its meeting dated 06.05.1997 made a statutory recommendation under section 9 (1) (g) of the NCM Act recommending in continuation of its earlier recommendation for outright removal of the proviso in (Constitution Scheduled Caste) Order, 1950 which confines the SC status strictly to three specified religions to the exclusion of all other religions. It is necessary in the opinion of the Commission to do so in order to fully implement Constitutions stress on the guarantee of equality before law and equal protection of law and Constitutional prohibition of all religion based discrimination."

On 04. 04. 2011, the Co Respondent, National Commission for Scheduled Castes' Affidavit was sent to the Ministry of Law and Justice's Wing, which is situated in the Supreme Court of India for filing the Affidavit in the Supreme Court of India, which says:

Date: 18.09.2007, "It was decided that reservation should be extended to them but the share of 15% of SCs should not be disturbed..."

Date: 22.04.2010, "In view of the Full Report being laid before the Parliament, the NCSC may reiterate its earlier position & fully endorse the recommendations of the (NCRLM- National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities)."

Date: 14.02.2011, "The issue of inclusion of Dalit Christian and Dalit Muslims in the Scheduled Castes was discussed at length. After the discussion the Commission decided that the issue should be tested on the following two parameters."

(i). Whether Dalit Christians and Dalit Muslims are following the same traditions and customs after conversion from SC as before conversion.

(ii). Even after conversion to Christianity or Islam, do they suffer from the same social disabilities (Example: untouchability, discrimination etc.) as before.

Since the matter is reported to be urgent, the Commission recommends inclusion of Dalit Christians and Dalit Muslims in the category of Scheduled Castes, if they fulfil the above said two parameters."

United Nations' Bodies, International communities' support in favour of Christians and Muslims of Scheduled Castes Origin.

United Nations, CERD; International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination Distr. General, CERD/C/IND/CO/19, 5 May 2007.

Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Seventieth session, 19 February – 9 March 2007, consideration of Reports submitted by State Parties under Article 9 of the Convention, Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, India.

The Committee notes with concern that Dalits who convert to Islam or to Christianity to escape caste discrimination reportedly lose their entitlement under affirmative action programmes, unlike converts who become Buddhists or Sikhs. [arts. 5 (d) (vii) and 2 (2)]

The Committee recommends that the State party restore the eligibility for affirmative action benefits of all members of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes having converted to another religion.

GE.09-10462 (E) 290109, United Nations, A. General Assembly. Distr: General, A/HRC/10/8/Add.326 January 2009. Human Rights Council, Tenth session, Agenda item 3, Promotion and Protection of all Human Rights, Civil, Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, including the right to development.

Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Hon. Asma Jahangir.

Addendum, Mission to India, A/HRC/10/8/Add.3; The Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief undertook a country visit to India from 3 to 20 March 2008, upon the invitation of the Government.

“The legal link between Scheduled Caste status and affiliation to specific religions seems problematic in terms of human rights standards. The Special Rapporteur would like to recall that the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination noted with concern that Dalits who convert to Islam or to Christianity to escape caste discrimination reportedly lose their entitlement under affirmative action programmes, unlike converts who become Buddhists or Sikhs.”

United Nations, A/HRC/23/47/Add.1, General Assembly, Distr: General, 26 April 2013

Human Rights Council, Twenty-third session, Agenda item 3

Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development; Report of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Christ of Heyns.

Addendum, Mission to India, VIII.Recommendations.

“The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act should be reviewed with the aim of extending its scope to Dalit Muslims and Dalit Christians.”

International Labour Organization.

NORMLEX, Information System on International Labour Standards Observation (CEACR) – adopted 2012, published 102nd ILC session (2013) Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111) – India (Ratification: 1960).

“...the Committee requests the Government to provide information on the outcome of the Supreme Court decision with respect to the denial of quota rights of Dalit Muslims and Dalit Christians under the reservation system, and any follow-up thereto.”

To the Bishops of India, on the occasion of Visit Ad Limina Apostolorum,-
Address of Holy Father Pope John Paul II, on Tuesday, 3 June 2003.

“...Unfortunately, in some regions the State authorities have yielded to the pressures of these extremists and have passed unjust anti-conversion laws, prohibiting free exercise of the natural right to religious freedom, or withdrawing State support for those in scheduled castes who have chosen to convert to Christianity.”

As per Indian Constitution and International Covenant, Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order 1950, Paragraph Three's Religious ban to restrict SC status to Christians and Muslims of Scheduled Castes Origin is unconstitutional provision.

Paragraph (3) of the Constitution (Scheduled Caste) Order, 1950 issued in exercise of Article 341(1) of the Constitution of India, which says that, “Notwithstanding anything contained in paragraph 2, no person who professes a religion different from Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism shall be deemed to be a member of a Scheduled Caste” is unconstitutional and void, being in violation of Articles 14 (Equality before Law), 15 (Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth), 16 (Equality of opportunity in matters of public Employment) and 25 (Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion) of the Constitution of India and the equality before Articles 18, 24, 26 and 27 (All four Articles prevent Religion based discrimination) of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; Part II, Article 2 (2) (Prevention of Religion based discrimination by the States) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Articles for upholding religious freedom and rights 2, 16 and 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Present urgent need to resolve this issue:

Since concerned with this issue, litigation is pending in the Supreme Court of India, for resolving issue taking steps for doing amendment is very remote in nature, matter is sub-judice (though it may require positive political consensus, voice voting, simple majority in Parliament for doing amendment- Note most of the Political Parties are supporting this issue); other only option is getting speedy justice from the Supreme Court of India after receiving the Counter Affidavit (Written Statement) from the Union of India (From 2008 January onwards, the Union of India had

assured to the Supreme Court of India that it would bring response; even after so many assurances, Union of India does not file its response to the Apex Court), filing written statement (Counter Affidavit) to the Court of Law is natural justice, which is not done in this case; for filing the stand of Union of India before the Supreme Court of India, forthwith the above said Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs ought to take a revised Cabinet decision and render justice to these people through the Apex Court of India . Let justice be done to Christians and Muslims of Scheduled Castes Origin for extending them the Scheduled Castes status by the Supreme Court of India, Policy makers, Executives, Civil Society including the Christian community, Academicians, International community and so on collectively.

Thank you so much!

10. Dalit Poverty, Caste and Christian Responsibility

Sarat Chandra Nayak,
(Bishop of Berhampur, Orissa. India.)

It is interesting and useful to analyse the three different concepts, the Title comprises: **Dalit Poverty, Caste and Christian Responsibility**. Caste is a determining factor in understanding Dalit Poverty and Christian Responsibility. I believe it is not by sheer coincidence that Caste is placed at the centre of the Title Dalit. Caste not only causes poverty but also perpetuates it. Poverty starts with Casteism and Christian Responsibility cannot end without effectively addressing the issue of Caste.



Dalit Poverty: Gone are the days when people understood Poverty as lack of basic needs of human life. Today the concept of basic needs is rightly enhanced, based on the complexity of human life and the place & environment in which the person lives. In India different criteria was followed to fix the poverty line. In the Ninth Five-Year Plan (1997-2002), the BPL was set according to the annual family income. Families with less than Rs. 20,000 income, less than two hectares land, and no television or refrigerator were placed Below Poverty Line. This income is bare minimum to support the food requirements and does not provide much for the other basic essential items like health, education etc. That is why some times the poverty lines have been described as starvation lines. In the Tenth Five-Year Plan, BPL for rural areas was based on the degree of deprivation in respect of 13 parameters like landholding, type of house, clothing, food security, sanitation, consumer durables, literacy status, labour force, means of livelihood, status of children, type of indebtedness, reasons for migration etc. Whereas for urban areas it was based on the degree of deprivation in respect of seven parameters: roof, floor, water, sanitation, education level, type of employment, and status of children in a house. The State of Kerala had nine parameters and families which lack access to four or more parameters are classified as BPL. The parameters are: 1) No land or less than five cents of land, 2) No house or dilapidated house, 3) No sanitation latrine, 4) Family without colour

television, 5) No regular employed person in the family, 6) No access to safe drinking water, 7) Women-headed household or presence of widows or divorcee, 8) Scheduled castes and scheduled tribes (SC/ST), 9) Mentally retarded or disabled member in the family. The nine parameters for rural areas are the same, but the colour television criterion is replaced by “family with an illiterate adult member” criterion.

Caste: The etymological meaning of the term Dalit is trampled underfoot, oppressed or crushed to the extent of losing the original identity. However, today, this term is used to denote all sub-castes that are known as untouchables. Mahatma Gandhi called them Harijans (People of God). In legal and constitutional term they are Scheduled Castes, who under the castes system belong to the last strata of the society, who are socially oppressed, economically deprived, politically marginalized. Mahatma Gandhi believed in raising the status of Dalits, by removing the degrading stigma and manifestations of untouchability, while retaining the traditional caste system. On the other hand Dr Ambedkar, himself an ‘untouchable’, believed that only by destroying the caste system could ‘untouchability’ be destroyed. Unfortunately, though the Indian Constitution legally removed untouchability from the Indian society, it could not blot it out from the Indian mentality. Dalit poor suffer more than the other poor, as social discrimination places them in a disadvantageous situation. Almost 90% of Dalits live in rural areas and a majority of them have no land, the major source of income in rural areas. They lack educational qualification & skills to get jobs that would fetch them more salary. Traditionally, they are engaged in so called menial jobs like Sweeper, Washer man, barber, cobbler, blacksmith, drummer, cleaner etc., that get the least wages. Dalit children are not allowed /expected to aspire for the higher /respectable jobs that get higher salary. Therefore, the much needed upward movement in terms of earning more does not take place. The Christian Dalits in India suffer the worse, for they lose all benefits /privileges / reservations that is given to other Dalits (Scheduled Castes), as affirmative action. They are doubly discriminated. First, as Dalits they suffer all the humiliations, deprivations and oppressions in the society and then as Christian Dalit, they are discriminated and deprived of benefits, accorded to other citizens of Dalit origin in the Country. It is an injustice Dalit Christians in India are fighting against for the past sixty three years. A Public Interest Litigation is filed in the Supreme Court of India, in 2004, challenging the constitutional validity of the 1950 Presidential Order through which Christian Dalits are excluded from the Scheduled Caste Status and from all its benefit, purely on the religious ground. For the Indian Constitution does not allow any discrimination on its citizens based on religion. Supreme Court has asked the Government of India its response to the issue, but for the last ten years the Government is, with various pretexts delaying in giving its response. The Supreme Court, it seems to me, also does not feel it urgent to decide the case when 16.5

million citizens of India (Dalit Christians) go on suffering the crystal clear injustice & human right violation for the past 65 years. If one practices Hinduism, he/she gets the government benefit, if he/she becomes a Christian he/she is deprived of it. Therefore, it is against the very secular nature of our Indian Constitution. If the Supreme Court finds itself helpless to give its judgment without the response of the Government, which for its political expediency, goes on postponing its response, “to whom shall we go?” “Justice delayed is justice denied,” but in this case, can one be wrong to say, “Justice delayed indefinitely is injustice condoned”? It is not out of place to mention that Dalit Christians do feel discrimination within the Church, not only from the point of view of proportional justice (e.g. the statistical fact shows that there are only 4% of Dalit leadership, even though Dalit Christians constitute 65% of the Church in India), but also from the mentality point of view. Quite many Christians still seem to carry the long tail of casteism. They feel they were mere Dalits before becoming Christians, and now they have become Dalit Christians.

Christian Responsibility: As it is said in the beginning, Christian Responsibility cannot end without effectively addressing the issue of Caste. Caste based discrimination is no less than the colour (race) based discrimination. Both are twins, rather, the two sides of the same coin: Discrimination based on one’s birth. **A person’s Christian responsibility is to root out caste mentality within the Church, and also outside the Church, in the society in general.**

Christian Responsibility towards the issue is to have the Christ like response: Even though He was rich, he became poor for our sake that we might be rich in His poverty (2Cor. 8:9). In the simple terms Pope Francis puts it: “Poor Church for the poor”. It is not an option, but the very vocation of the Church. It is Identifying itself with the Dalits, standing in solidarity with the poor Dalits. Pope Francis emphasises on the “fellowship with others” that “enables us to see them not as enemies or rivals, but as brothers and sisters to be accepted and embraced.” On the other hand the global indifference and globalization of indifference that “makes us slowly inured to the suffering of others and closed in on ourselves.” Poverty is a scandal to the humanity that prides itself in various developments and growth.

We need to have a broader, more comprehensive approach to teach tolerance and equality early in primary schools, it is unlikely that the social acceptance of caste-based discrimination will fade any time soon. Without accepting and respecting as equals our domestic workers in our homes & institutions, discrimination on the basis of the work / profession is not going to go. Deprivation, exclusion, discrimination on the basis of castes not only causes poverty but also intensifies and perpetrates it.

There is need to provide equal opportunity to Dalit Poor, by way of making quality education and skill trainings available and affordable to them. In *Evangelii Gaudium* Pope Francis warns: “Without equal opportunities the different forms of aggression and conflict will find a fertile terrain for growth and eventually explode.” Inequality eventually engenders a violence which recourse to arms cannot and never will be able to resolve.” The emphasis here is not so much on the possible consequence of fear of violence, rather, it is the call of every Christian to bring peace, by removing various forms of inequality, and thereby become the child of God.

Bishops of India on discrimination of Dalit Christians within the Church, said: “It is ..a sin against God and humanity. This must be taught in Catechism and homilies and any form of discrimination must be completely stopped, wherever it exists, be it among the priests, in religious communities, in selection of candidates for priesthood and religious life and in the sphere of administration”. (CBCI General Body Statement 1998). In 2012, it reiterated: “Recognizing the untouchability and caste discrimination as contrary to the Gospel of Jesus, we will root out this evil and make concerted efforts to Empower Dalits. We commit ourselves to join hands with our Dalit brothers and sisters in their fight for equal rights and constitutional benefits which are denied to them on the basis of religion. We assure the marginalized and weaker sections that we will do everything possible to train and equip them for leadership positions at local, regional and national levels.” In 2014 at Palai the CBCI said: We listened to the call of Pope Francis urging us to “work to eliminate the structural causes of poverty and to promote the integral development of the poor.” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 188). We want the Church to be truly a Church of the Poor. .. We will continue the fight against the 1950 Presidential Order, which unjustly discriminates against Dalit Christians and we demand that the Government remove this 64 year injustice. Justice delayed is justice denied. We also commit ourselves to rooting out all forms of discrimination within the Church and ensuring equal opportunities in leadership roles for Dalit Christians.

Christian response does not end with what it does within itself. Vatican II calls for the collaboration with all “the people of good will” to promote true and sustainable human development. This is what is called the inclusive approach: not only including all the needy in our target group, but also to include all actors & all factors in our efforts. We need to globalize our efforts and the consciousness of human solidarity. Sometimes, the consciousness and over cautiousness of being a minority in some counties and the fear of arm twisting from civil authorities Christians / Churches seem to follow the path of “go slow” or in order not be seen as unpatriotic, hesitant to call global attention on the issues of Dalit poverty. But Dalit poverty is no more an issue of one country or other, it is a global issue and needs global solidarity for an effective Christian response.

11. Make Caste History

Lord David Alton (*Professor the Lord David Alton of Liverpool.*)

When Fr. Gerard Mitchell SJ first approached me to speak at this conference, I hesitated because I know that there are many who are better qualified to speak on this than me. My limited knowledge is based on some short visits to India and on attending hearings and participating in debates in the British Parliament – most recently in support of the provisions of the Equality Act designating caste as an aspect of race and a protected characteristic.



On a visit to West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi I spoke about the plight of India's untouchables, the Dalits, and the forms of exploitation and slavery which stem from the caste system. Dalit is a term which derives from a Sanskrit word meaning "broken" or "crushed".

200 million Dalits in India make up one sixth of India's population and one thirty fifth of the world's population. Dalits live in 132 countries, including countries like the UK, where South Asians have migrated.

Take Dalits and Tribal's together, both of whom fall outside the caste system and experience discrimination: they comprise a quarter of India's population and one twenty fourth of the world's population.

Lest you think that these are historic questions let me make absolutely clear that hardly a day passes without some new horror perpetrated against the Dalits.

These are just some of stories taken from the Indian newspapers in the last seven days: *Dalit woman burnt by employer for resisting rape in Bulandshahr*- India Today; *5 held for gang rape of Dalit girl near Dindigul*- The Times Of India; *Dalit woman assaulted, stripped in Hassan village*- The Hindu; *Dalit's, death and the fight for dignity* – DNA; *Dalit women in Haryana to march for redressal of cases of*

*atrocities committed by upper caste men- Two Circle; Dalit Beaten up for Touching Caste Hindu- The New Indian Express; Children protest against discrimination at school- The Hindu; [No clean water for Dalits?](#)- Kashmir Times; *Sorcery slur on Dalit family- The Times Of India; Over 39,000 cases filed under Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes Act in 2012: Business Standard.**

Two hundred years ago, on 22 June 1813, six years after he had successfully led the parliamentary campaign to end the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade, William Wilberforce made a major speech in the House of Commons about India.

He said that the caste system, “*must surely appear to every heart of true British temper to be a system at war with truth and nature; a detestable expedient for keeping the lower orders of the community bowed down in an abject state of hopelessness and irremediable vassalage. It is justly, Sir, the glory of this country, that no member of our free community is naturally precluded from rising into the highest classes in society*”.

Two centuries later the caste system which Wilberforce said should be abolished – and which the British during the colonial period signally failed to end – still disfigures the lives of vast swathes of humanity. India’s Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh has trenchantly and rightly argued that, “*untouchability is not just social discrimination; it is a blot on humanity*”.

Today, I would like to pay particular tribute to some of those who work tirelessly to combat caste, especially the work of *Voice of Dalit International* and the *Dalit Freedom Network*, particularly its international President Joseph D’Souza – whom I first met after he had joined forces, in 2006, with other Christian leaders after five Dalits were lynched for skinning a dead cow.

In New Delhi those leaders joined a protest, met the parents of the victims and provided their families humanitarian assistance. Dr.D’Souza said: “*The statement we were making was that these Dalits were human beings, and that it was the caste system that consigned them to work with animals – a statement in direct contrast to that of a Hindu nationalist leader, who said that a cow was more valuable than a Dalit.*”

In my study at home in Lancashire, I have a small terracotta pot given to me by Dr D’Souza. Such pots must be broken once a Dalit has drunk out of them so as not to pollute or contaminate other castes. This is the

21st century. It is not the pots which need to be broken, not the people, but the system which ensnares them. Dr D'Souza rightly says:

“If we are not intentional about bringing change and transformation in lives and society it will not happen. To love people is to act on behalf of them”.

As Parliament considers the new Bill on modern slavery, reflect that the Global Slavery Index, published in October last, confirmed that around half of the world's slaves are in India – some 13.9 million out of a global total of 29.8 million, and that most of them are Dalits or Tribals. In the Hindu caste system, they are regarded as subhuman—lower even than animals and left fighting a largely unknown struggle for emancipation.

Evidence points to 80-95% of bonded labourers (the vast majority of the ‘modern slaves’ in India) being Dalits, 99% of ritual sex slaves (the 250,000 temple prostitutes known locally as Devadasi or Jogini) being Dalits, and the majority of those trafficked into brothels or into domestic servitude being Dalits or Tribals.

If you are a Dalit in India you are 27 times more likely to be trafficked or exploited in another form of modern slavery than anyone else. Much of this is brilliantly documented in Dalit Freedom Network's booklet, *“Half the World Slaves?”*

According to CNN, India's former Home Secretary, Madhukar Gupta, *“remarked that at least 100 million people were involved in human trafficking in India”*, whether for sex or for labour.

The head of the Central Bureau of Investigation said that India occupied a unique position as a source, transit and destination country for trafficking, and that it has more than 3 million prostitutes, of whom an estimated 40 per cent are children. These statistics are hugely significant: the situation in India simply must be at the heart of the global fight against trafficking.

Caste should be recognised as a root cause of trafficking, of modern day slavery and poverty and unless we raise the profile of the oppressed Dalits nothing will change.

To prepare me for this conference, Voice of Dalit International were good enough to send me a copy of Dhananjay Keer's admirable biography of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar who was born into a family of untouchables in 1891.

When Dr. Ambedkar died on December 7th, 1956, Prime Minister Nehru adjourned the Lok Sabha for the remainder of the day having told

parliamentarians that Ambedkar had been controversial but had revolted against something which everybody should revolt against – all the oppressing features of Hindu society.

Dr. Ambedkar, the architect of Indian Constitution once remarked that *“Untouchability is far worse than slavery, for the latter may be abolished by statute. It will take more than a law to remove the stigma from the people of India. Nothing less than the aroused opinion of the world can do it”*

Ambedkar’s life was a life of relentless struggle for human rights. Born on a dunghill and condemned to a childhood of social leprosy, ejected from hotels, barber shops, temples and offices; facing starvation while studying to secure his education; elected to high political office and leadership without dynastic patronage; and to achieve fame as a lawyer and law maker, constitutionalist, educator, professor, economist and writer, illustrates what the human spirit can overcome.

In 1927, the young Ambedkar famously led a march to the Chavdar reservoir, a place prohibited to Dalits. On arriving at the reservoir, he bent down, cupped his hands, scooped up some water, and drank – an act completely forbidden by the caste system. The Brahmins, or upper castes, responded by furiously pouring 108 pots of curd, milk, cow dung, and cow urine into the reservoir – a ritual act which they claimed would “purify” the water polluted and defiled by untouchables.

Ambedkar could so easily have taken the path of violent revolution, spurred on by bitter hatred or a need for revenge – but although others regarded his shadow as a sacrilege and his touch as a pollutant, he demonstrated why it is the caste system which deserves to be put beyond human touch not the men, women and children condemned by it.

Ambedkar made untouchability a burning topic and gave it global significance. For the first time in 2500 years the insufferable plight of India’s untouchables became a central political question. Among untouchables themselves he awakened a sense of human dignity and self respect. He repudiated the helplessness of fate, the impotent, demoralised incapacity that insisted that everything is pre-ordained and irretrievable.

He began a war against a social order that allowed caste to condemn millions to a life of irreversible servitude and social ostracism. This was an existence he had shared. *“You have no idea of my sufferings”* he once said. Having personally experienced life below the starvation line, the effects of destitution and squalor, the humiliation of ejection, segregation, and rank discrimination, *“having passed through crushing miseries and endless trouble”* Ambedkar determined to challenge these

evils by entering political life: becoming renowned as a scholar-politician, sadly, a combination so little in evidence today.

Ambedkar understood that the great nation of India would never achieve its potential if it remained disfigured and divided by caste. Without freedom to marry, who they would; to live with, who they would; to dine with, who they would; to embrace or touch, who they would; or to work with, who they would, the nation could— and can – never be fully united or able to fulfill its extraordinary potential.

He believed that “*the roots of democracy*” are to be found “*in social relationships and in the associate life of the people who form the society.*” He said that “*if you give education...the caste system will be blown up. This will improve the prospect of democracy in India and put democracy in safer hands.*”

Education is still the best hope for social transformation. Once people are empowered by education – as Ambedkar was himself – they can begin to address issues of poverty, lack of dignity, discrimination and other dehumanising attitudes. Do not underestimate the power of good quality, English-medium education taught from a worldview that emphasises values such as dignity, equality, acceptance, human worth, and self-esteem. I say English-medium because this is the preserve of high castes, and it is still the language of opportunity – the language of higher education, government, and commerce.

India is to be admired for providing near-universal education, and there has been a rise from 7 per cent to 13 per cent in those entering higher education, but many agree that teaching remains poor and only 20 per cent of job seekers have any vocational training.

Even these opportunities tend to be denied to the Dalits and the 84 million tribal people, who suffer discrimination and marginalisation. This vast expanse of humanity, trapped in a time warp, appears wholly unconnected to and at variance with India’s sophisticated economic and technological advances—and is certainly at variance with the advertising slogans, “*Amazing India*” and “*Incredible India*”.

What is truly amazing and incredible in this day and age is that “*the cruel shackles*” of the caste system, this “*detestable expedient ... a system at war with truth and nature*” should persist in 2014.

While still a young man of twenty, Ambedkar perceptively wrote: “*Let your mission be to educate and preach the idea of education to those at least who are near to and in close contact with you.*” He said that social progress would be greatly accelerated if female and

male education were pursued side by side. He later insisted that “*We will attain self elevation only if we learn self-help, regain our self-respect, and gain self knowledge.*”

He supported Britain’s war effort against the Nazis because he said it was a war between democracy and dictatorship. He linked it to the battle for the removal of caste: “*the battle is in the fullest sense spiritual...it is a battle for freedom. It is a battle for the reclamation of the human personality.*” He told his audience to “*educate, agitate and organise.*”

Ambedkar rightly perceived the negative effects which caste has on economic development – and in his booklet “*Annihilation of Caste*” he argued that caste deadens, paralyses and cripples the people, undermining productive activity by frequently denying opportunities to those with natural aptitude and through the entrenchment of servitude. Caste amounts to the vivisection of society.

Ten years ago the deadening effects of caste were recognised by the Department for International Development (DFID).

In a Policy Paper they stated that ‘*Caste causes poverty*’, and ‘*gets into the way of poverty reduction*’; that caste ‘*reduces the productive capacity and poverty reduction of a society as a whole*’; and that ‘*poverty reduction policies often fail to reach the socially excluded*’, Dalits ‘*unless, they are specifically designed to do so*’.

Yet these clear and coherent priorities scandalously failed to make any appearance whatsoever in the *Millennium Development Goals* and although the post-2015 High Level Panel Report, chaired by David Cameron, does include a section on “*Other Vulnerable Groups*” and the one group mentioned by name are the Dalits, we need to say and do far more. The Panel was right to argue that there is a need for “*Legislative and institutional mechanisms to recognise the indivisible rights of indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, Dalits and other socially excluded groups must be put in place*” but how is that reflected in our day to day priorities, diplomacy and policies?

Dalits constitute 40% of the global poor and are denied of DFID Funding, because they largely live in India, which simply doesn’t make the policy priorities. This becomes a new form of untouchability.

One development worker, with 14 years experience of working among Dalits, says that “*95% of development time, energy and resources are wasted on combating ... a ‘general Caste mindset’...stipulating*

how different segments of caste based society should live as touchables or untouchables, humans or sub-humans. The whole life of more than 50% of the population, from morning till night, from birth to death, is predetermined.”

In India you can't make poverty history unless you make caste history. As we examine what has been achieved through the MDGs and the plight of the global poor the professional development agencies need to take a long hard look at the way they target poverty. As they think beyond 2015 they need to listen, rather than impose, and develop a cross thematic framework for addressing the curse of the caste system.

Some of these agencies need to radically rethink their mindset and priorities. They will be far more effective in tackling poverty if they tackle social exclusion. The churches, too, need to play a more decisive role in recognising the existence of caste and its consequences – in India but in the UK too, where 50% of our estimated 1 million Dalits are considered to be poor.

Ambedkar also saw the role which religion could play in shaping attitudes and behaviour. He repudiated Marxist atheism and refused to be forced into a repudiation of religious faith because of its distortions. But he was scathing when he saw religion as a cause of human suffering.

He attacked Hindu priests who refused admission to Dalits to their temples and was scathing about those Christian churches which had imported the caste system into the segregation of believers. And of Islam he said:

“The brotherhood of Islam is not the brotherhood of man. It is the brotherhood of Muslims for Muslims only. For non Muslims there is nothing but contempt and enmity.”

He said that from his study of comparative religion there were two personalities who could captivate him – the Buddha and Christ.

Towards the end of his life he would convert to Buddhism as a protest against the failure of Indian religious leaders to reject the caste system and insisted that the spiritual dimension of mankind is bound up with 1) the sanction of law and morality (“*without either society is sure to go to pieces*”); 2) that religion must be in accord with reason; 3) that religion must recognise the fundamental tenets of liberty, equality, and fraternity; and 4) that religion must not ennoble poverty.

In considering their response to caste and the Dalits any Christian from the Catholic tradition, or those running Church agencies, should ponder carefully the words of Pope John Paul II:

“At all times you must continue to make certain that special attention is given to those belonging to the lowest castes, especially the Dalits. They should never be segregated from other members of society. Any semblance of a caste-based prejudice in relations between Christians is a countersign to authentic human solidarity, a threat to genuine spirituality, and a serious hindrance to the Church’s mission of evangelisation.”

Let them also reflect that violence against Dalit Christians has intensified in recent years.

In 2008, two women—one of whom was seven months’ pregnant—were gang-raped in Nadia village, Madhya Pradesh. The village leader ordered the act after the women’s husbands refused to renounce their Christian faith. On January 16, 2006, Christian homes were set on fire in Matiapada village, Orissa. Instead of the arsonists being brought to justice, the Christians were imprisoned for nine days under the state’s anti-conversion law.

Through Dr. Ambedkar’s colossal labours caste began to decay but even now it has not died. On April 29th 1947 the Constituent Assembly of India declared *“Untouchability in any form is abolished and the imposition of any disability on that account shall be an offence.”* *The New York Times* compared it with the abolition of slavery and the freeing of the Russian serfs. *The News Chronicle* in London praised it as one of the greatest acts in history.

Although untouchability was barred by the constitution, the system was not dismantled. Most of the worst forms of exploitation are proscribed by statute, but all too often the laws are simply not implemented and the police further entrench, rather than protect against, caste prejudice.

This point was made repeatedly in the concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in May 2007.

A damning verdict was reached also by an in-depth report by the Robert F Kennedy Centre, entitled *Understanding Untouchability: A Comprehensive Study of Practices and Conditions in 1,589 Villages*. It describes,

“The Government of India’s continued ignorance about the depth of the problem and inadequacy in addressing untouchability and meeting its legal obligations in regard to the abolition of untouchability”.

Some individual Dalits have reached high positions in Indian society, not least Justice K G Balakrishnan, who rose to become the senior judge of India's Supreme Court, and Ms Meira Kumar, who became the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, the lower House of India's Parliament. But these are exceptions. As I heard first hand from Dalits I met in India even where they are securing some kind of elementary education the opportunities for educational progress later and employment opportunities are all too frequently still blocked to them.

Consider for a moment what must be one of the most appalling and disgraceful forms of labour anywhere in the world, known euphemistically as manual scavenging. It involves cleaning human excrement from dry latrines and is uniquely performed by Dalits as a consequence of their caste. The number engaged in this occupation is not known for certain, but it may be as high as, or higher than, the equivalent of the population of Birmingham.

Tens of millions of India's citizens are subject to many forms of highly exploitative forms of labour and modern-day slavery. This often plays into the problem of debt bondage and bonded labour, which affects tens of millions. It perpetuates a cycle of despair and hopelessness, as generations are bonded to the family debt, unable to be educated and unable to escape. Tragically, the debt is often the result of a loan taken out for something as simple and essential as a medical bill.

At times, Britain and India have had a turbulent relationship; but what is often called "the idea of India" is one that continues to captivate and enthrall anyone who has been fortunate enough to travel there.

In 1949, India and Britain were founding members of the Commonwealth, which exists to promote democracy, human rights, good governance, and the rule of law, individual liberty, egalitarianism, free trade, multiculturalism and world peace. Britain and India are democratic nations with many shared values as well as significant common economic and security interests. Bilateral trade is worth more than £13 billion annually. Our cultural, sporting, linguistic and historic links—some of which have required colonial ghosts to be laid to rest—underline the values that bind us together.

Yet, in 2014, while India is a rising world power and is rightly gaining a reputation for innovation and excellence in many fields, what its Prime Minister calls a "*blot on humanity*" disfigures India's reputation and has become one of the world's greatest human rights challenges.

Millions of people remain imprisoned by the bondage of what Wilberforce described as "*the cruel shackles*" of the caste system. Those shackles inevitably lock their prisoners into the most menial forms of labour, trap

them in servitude and leave them susceptible to innumerable forms of exploitation.

And consider the people who are represented by the statistics.

It is estimated that every day three Dalit women are raped; Dalit women are often forced to sit at the back of their school classrooms, or even outside; on average every hour two Dalit houses are burnt down; every 18 minutes a crime is committed against a Dalit; each day two Dalits are murdered; 11 Dalits are beaten; many are impoverished; some half of Dalit children are under-nourished; 12% die before their fifth birthday; 56 per cent of Dalit children under the age of four are malnourished; their infant mortality rate is close to 10 %; vast numbers are uneducated or illiterate; and 45% cannot read or write; in one recent year alone, 25,455 crimes were committed against Dalits, although many more went unreported, let alone investigated or prosecuted; 70 per cent are denied the right to worship in local temples; 60 million Dalits are used as forced labourers, often reduced to carrying out menial and degrading forms of work;

Segregated and oppressed, Dalits are frequently the victims of violent crime. In one case, 23 Dalit agricultural workers, including women and children, were murdered by the private army of high-caste landlords. What was their crime? It was listening to a local political party, whose views threatened the landlords' hold on local Dalits as cheap labour. The list of atrocities and violence is exponential.

India is the world's largest democracy—home to one-sixth of the world's population. It can be proud of its many fine achievements. Like all our democracies, it is a work in progress, and there are many bright spots. India produced one of the first female Heads of Government; a Dalit, Dr. Ambedkar, wrote the constitution; a female Dalit became a powerful politician; a Muslim has been head of state four times; and a Jew and a Sikh are two of India's greatest war heroes. So an astounding amount has been achieved.

However, India cannot be proud of the more general fate of the Dalits, the caste system or the extremism which feeds off ostracism and alienation and which threatens modern India.

Although Dr. Ambedkar was able to have India's Constitution and the laws framed to end untouchability, for millions and millions of people,

many of those provisions have not been worth the paper on which they are written.

**Ambedkar's own struggle may now be history; caste is not.
In our generation it is surely time to make caste history.**

3 questions for conference participants:

1. Do you think the structure, form and cause of Dalit poverty, the root cause, of which is caste, is different from other forms of material poverty; hence church and its agencies should recognise this difference and address Dalit poverty through specifically designed development policies, procedures and having special Dalit desk/ Department? If so how do you want this to be done?
2. In the light of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2013 and Pope John Paul II address to the Bishops, do you think Christians worldwide, particularly of UK, have a responsibility to educate their communities and society around them on the intensity of caste discrimination, number of caste discriminated global poor, caste as root cause of poverty, Dalit struggles etc?. If so how this could be done?
3. Given the complexity of Dalit poverty and distance Church has taken so far from it, do you think, there is a need for Church and Government creating public awareness about Dalits and their struggles in UK, internationally and within the Church as well as reviewing their aid/ development policies by proportionately focusing thematically and resource wise?

David Alton

(Professor Lord Alton of Liverpool)

House of Lords, London SW1A OPW

Roscoe Foundation for Citizenship,

Liverpool John Moores University

altond@parliament.uk www.davidalton.com www.davidalton.net

12. 'Beyond 2015' [Panel Discussion]

i] Commonwealth Perspectives: Ideas for a new development agenda, Guy Holloway [Commonwealth Foundation] Powerpoint

For the last 18 months Guy has been leading on the Commonwealth Foundation Post 2015 'Breaking Point' project which has undertaken 14 national consultations, 5 regional consultations and worked with over 350 civil society organisations. The project has produced seven policy papers on cross cutting issue areas identified by civil society as unique to Commonwealth countries and has fed into the UN High Level Panel and Open Working Group processes, in addition to being the foundational content for the Commonwealth People's Forum in Sri Lanka, November 2013.



- Established in 1965
- An intergovernmental organisation
- 47 Commonwealth Member States out of 53
- Governed by a board of HC and CS representatives
- Civil Society Advisory Committee advises on strategy/direction
- Relunched in 2012

Participatory Governance

- Central concept in programming
- Integral to the vision and mission
- Focus for achieving development outcomes
- Civil society and the demand side for effective, responsive and accountable governance
- Civil society-government-market interaction
- Dialogue - cornerstone of participatory governance

Programming Strategies: Capacitating civil society to effectively engagement Institutions in Governance

The Commonwealth Foundation and the Post 2015

Breaking Point

- Original report in 2005 *Breaking with Business as Usual*
 - 14 Countries (High, Middle, Low Income, Small States)
 - Examined the first 5 years of the MDGs and their value to Civil Society
- New project started in 2012: *Breaking Point*

Answers four questions:

- 1) Civil society analysis on progress towards MDGs
- 2) Usefulness and opportunities of the MDG framework for CSOs
- 3) Contribution of CSOs to the MDGs attainment
- 4) Key lessons learned from the MDG experience for the post-2015 agenda.

- Partnered with UNMC
- 14 countries (CF) + 6 (UNMC)
- National Research and Consultations

Regional Consultations

- A series of consultations in seven regions across the Commonwealth to flesh out strategic initiatives
- Validate MDG national research
- Begin developing a regional agenda
- Civil society engagement strategy

Commonwealth Perspectives

- Analysis of general perceptions of the MDGs by civil society
- Identified COMMON, CROSS CUTTING and/or UNIQUE development issues in the Commonwealth
- Developed a 'narrative' of Commonwealth civil society on the Post 2015 – which has subsequently been fed into other Commonwealth, UN and Civil Society processes
- Civil society recognises that the MDGs are not going to be accomplished but want to see acceleration in the final years
- The MDGs, although NOT utilised to its greatest effect, did provide a framework for civil society – government engagement

- New framework must ‘enable’ civil society inclusion
- Civil society must be part of the planning, delivery and monitoring of development
- Must include a framework for civil society – government interaction
- Must have an element of civil society resourcing

5 Major Areas of Development Concern for Civil Society in Commonwealth

- Gender Empowerment
- Young people and decent work
- Small states and vulnerabilities
- Non-communicable diseases
- Education

Commonwealth Perspectives

- Dalits were recognised, when the MDGs were first conceptualised, as a priority group that needed special attention
- Special provisions were made for them under national and constitutional affirmative action programmes
- The MDG record shows that Dalits fared worse than other social groups on key MDG indicators
- School enrolment was dramatically lower in Dalit groups
- Malnutrition rates were very high, especially in under 5’s
- Poverty rates are still proportionally higher, even though India was meant to have nearly succeeded in halving poverty rates
- Failure to implement constitutional provisions and laws on discrimination

Recommendations for post 2015

- A reinvigorated focus on achieving equity in development: could involve focusing on those for whom least effort was made
- Goals need to be set to address structural and governance inequalities to allow minority groups greater say
- Entitlement issues need to be addressed
- These issues could be heralded under a ‘holistic justice framework’

‘Beyond 2015’ [Panel Discussion]

Clarissa Poulson [Triple Line Consulting]

Introduction: I am Clarissa Poulson – work for Triple Line Consulting – VODI a grant-holder for the Civil Society Challenge Fund (CSCF) which Triple Line manages on behalf of DFID. DFID themselves not able to attend but we said that as Fund Managers we would be happy to represent DFID and take back points from this discussion (and other sessions). Not speaking on their authority or able to answer for the dept but representing.



Met Eugene Culas on a couple of occasions – admire his tenacity in exposing the source of poverty for millions of people in and from South Asia. Clear that understanding the root causes of poverty in any given context is vitally important if programmes are to be effective in tackling it or going beyond ‘sticking plaster’ approach. Applicants for funding to the CSCF and its successor, the Global Poverty Action Fund (GPAF), screened amongst other things for relevance, understanding of the problem and appropriateness of solution proposed. Both funds are focused on marginalised groups, so Dalits are the main beneficiaries of many projects funded in South Asia.

CSCF rights-based, about raising awareness, empowering individuals and communities, building capacity of civil society and giving voice to the poor and marginalised in forums where decisions are made which affect them. There are projects focused on education, health, livelihoods and social inclusion. VODI’s project is improving access to and quality of primary education for children from 200 villages in India and is building a Regional Dalit Rights Forum to advocate for the rights of Dalit people in Bundelkhand. It is working with local officials, communities, school teachers, parents to achieve this.

12 GPAF projects in Nepal, India and Pakistan have Dalits amongst their main beneficiaries. These projects will receive over £8m of funding

and are designed to reach nearly 2m direct beneficiaries and nearly 7m indirect beneficiaries through a range of projects focused on education, health, nutrition and livelihoods.

There are also several programmes funded directly by DFID country offices in the region such as the 'Rights of the Marginalised' programme in Bangladesh.

Post-2015: However the panel discussion is on the post-2015 agenda so I thought it would be helpful to provide a quick overview of the British Government's role in the international community to achieve this, and their position as the process enters its final phase. With the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) having 2015 as their target, several targets met but others not, what should follow on?

High Level Panel convened in 2012. David Cameron invited to co-chair the panel with the presidents of Indonesia and Liberia. 27 panel members drawn from Governments, business and civil society from all regions of the world.

HLP concluded its work in May 2013. Report described as 'bold and optimistic'. States clear that we can and must eliminate extreme poverty from the face of the earth by 2030. Achieve through five big shifts:

- Leave no one behind. MDGs aimed to halve extreme poverty by 2015 (with 1990 as starting point). Achieved ahead of target but still leaves many millions in extreme poverty. HLP says END poverty by 2030.
 - Put sustainable development at core: climate change, sustainable patterns of consumption and production
 - Transform economies for jobs and inclusive growth. Economic growth the only exit from poverty so need greater focus on promoting business and entrepreneurship, education, trade etc. for everyone's benefit
 - Build peace and effective, open and accountable institutions for all: peace, good governance, responsive and legitimate institutions, rule of law, property rights, freedom of speech, open political choice and access to justice
 - Forge a new Global Partnership – Govt. with business, community groups, donors, local govts. etc.
- * Proposed 12 measurable goals and 54 targets to support
 - * Big consultation, further work
 - * Report of UN Open Working Group and financing group in September 2014. UK a member of both groups. Starts an

inter-governmental process

* Final agreement – aim Sept 2015.

Reflections: These five statements do not mention discrimination, gender, marginalised groups, caste etc. and of these only genders is mentioned in the 12 goals. However they do mention ‘universal access to water and sanitation; equitable growth and the end poverty – and end poverty is THE central theme both for UK and for intl. community.

There is great significance in ‘leave no-one behind’:

- o Panel proposes that targets should only be considered ‘achieved’ when they are met for all income and social groups
- o Panel proposes a number of ‘zero goals’ – minimum standards that must be met by 100% of the population
- o In contrast to MDGs – based on national averages

Emphasis on institutions also very important. Dalits face discrimination because of centuries of policy and practice by rulers and fellow citizens. This systemic discrimination can be challenged through supportive policy and its enforcement, a change in mind-set amongst politicians at all levels and amongst leaders in business and society. Open and accountable institutions are fundamental to this happening and ensuring rule of law, access to justice, responsive and legitimate institutions etc. Also voice for the marginalised – through strengthened civil society – to challenge from below the power structures and beliefs which oppress. I’d like to hear your views ...

13. INGOS Addressing Caste caused Poverty

Dr. Kumar Prasant,

(Visionaries In Creative Action for Liberation and Progress [VICALP], Orissa, India.)

My association with development sector began in 1985, soon after I had completed my studies. I started as a development worker through a reputed NGO in South Odisha known for its community development work among the marginalised groups in South Odisha. My responsibilities in the organisation gave me an opportunity to represent the organisation in various forums as well as closely interact with donor agencies.



I have studied the country strategy papers of many of the donor agencies. They are found to be wonderful documents describing about the problems and issues, which people face, approaches to mitigate the problems, priority issues and priority areas, focus population etc. The documents also speak about what the agencies have done so far and plan to do in future. In most of the documents I have found inadequate analysis on the issue of Dalits. The agencies have been speaking about the socio-economic exclusion and not much is spoken about the exploitative and dehumanising systems that are woven around the lives of the Dalits.

The poverty that the Dalit communities face is not just deprivation or non-fulfillment of basic needs or simple lack of material wealth. Much more than that, it is the poverty caused by caste system, which enforces upon Dalits a life of perpetual poverty, deprivation, lowliness, servitude, beggary and condemns Dalits for being Dalits. The caste system enforces landlessness, discriminatory practices, denial of rights, violation of human rights in the name of fate and religion and justifies atrocity on Dalits as part of recommended punitive measures and therefore morally right. Caste system breeds inequity and inhuman behaviours as part of Indian traditional value system.

donor agencies probably realise these facts of Indian life. ~~Although front~~ do not come forward to address these issues head-on. This may be due to various factors such as-not willing to be seen as politically incorrect, lack of real understanding on the issue as there is no real Dalit representation in the INGOS. Very often we have seen donor agencies focusing on tribal issues and developing programs and projects that are relevant to tribal situation. This is a welcome step. At the Same time there is no special projects/development plans by donor agencies to develop the Dalits and address their issues. Year after year when a particular segment from the downtrodden groups is given focus and the other is neglected; it is definitely going to create more divide and in the long run it is going to be detrimental to equitable development of the vulnerable communities. There has to be this realization that both Tribals and Dalits are victims of societal injustice and caste based discrimination. In case of Dalits the community is always considered more untouchable and hence more subjugated and discriminated. Thus the Dalits are at the lowest socio-economic status and the Tribals are a little above them. The Dalits are considered to be perpetually landless people and ordained to be so by the caste society, whereas the Tribals have been given protection and their land rights including forest land rights is well protected by law. The donor agencies tend to ignore all these facts. However in all most all the project documents when poverty is discussed it is always in reference to the poverty of Tribals and Dalits in equal terms mostly. There was a time when NGOs led by dominant caste groups were trying to project themselves as protectors and saviours of Tribals and showing Dalits in a very poor light as being middle men and exploiters of Tribals; and the donor agencies were buying into this idea without taking it critically. In the eighties and nineties this skewed understanding shaped the planning of many donor agencies. Even the top offices of the donor agencies were dominated by the upper caste communities and their interest.

It is at this juncture VICALP began its journey as a grass-root based and Dalit-Adivasi led community organization. Its story has been a story of struggle to create a small space in the development sector dominated by dominant community members, a story of fight for dignity and asserting Dalit-Adivasi identity. VICALP is probably one of the first Dalit NGOs in Odisha and everything that it did was put under scrutiny. Nevertheless VICALP has stood the test of time and has created/ promoted a few 'first of its kind' institutions and movements. To site a few examples, VICALP promoted the first Dalit people's network in Odisha called Utkal Dalit Mahasabha-UDMS with membership base in eight districts of south Odisha; ADARS- A network of 14 Dalit NGOs and most of these NGOs were also promoted by VICALP. An alliance of communities for communal harmony and development was created, which is known as Ekta Abhiyan. A Dalit Christian movement was also

nurtured and promoted in Odisha, which is now part of NCDC. Not many donor agencies have come forward to support our efforts except a few agencies who have stood by VICALP and promoted it in the face of adverse situation also. These agencies are HELP-from Canada, CWS-Secunderabad based and Christian Aid. I would like to discuss about how a donor agency can come forward to promote Dalit organizations and help them to take up Dalit issues in the most effective manner. Here I take the example of Christian Aid. Our relation with Christian Aid (CA) goes back to 2005 when it supported VICALP through its own selection process or a network project to promote Utkal Dalit Mahasabha-UDMS a Dalit people's forum in Odisha. This support was given for two years. After this process was completed successfully, CA went out of its way to pick VICALP to be a state partner in its consortium project supported by EC-EDHR, though at that point of time VICALP was facing credibility questions due to conspiracy from certain quarters. CA reposed faith in a Dalit organisation like VICALP and has been doing its best to promote it at par with other NGOs in the state. In the kandhmal communal riots of 2007 and the second one in 2008-09 CA supported VICALP to undertake peace building work in 80 Gram panchayats in more than one thousand villages. This has been followed by support for inclusive economic development project for last four years and the Poor area civil society project-PACS in 400 Dalit and Adivasi villages for the last three years. CA has also helped VICALP develop a vocational training program for Dalit-Adivasi-rural youth. VICALP is continuing this program with industry support. The role which CA has played to promote atrocity monitoring, Dalit land rights campaign, Dalit women's rights campaign and the campaign for Dalit human rights are some of the good examples of how a donor agency can commit itself to the empowerment of the lowest among the downtrodden communities in India. Donor agencies with such commitments can be the real harbingers of change in the society and that is the need of the hour. For this to happen there has to be commitment and dedication to the cause and the leadership in the donor agency should be sensitive to the Dalit issues. There can be special Dalit desks in all the donor agencies working in India; and there have to be Dalit professionals in the staff of donor agencies/INGOs. Agencies can go a step further to allot separate funds for Dalit work like the national and state budgets which have scheduled caste sub-plan component in the budget allocation. I appeal to the International donor agencies to ponder on these issues, which I have put forward through my own observation from the last 30 years of experience in development sector

14. INGOs Addressing Poverty: A Much Needed Dalit Perspective

Mr. V.J. George

(*DALITAID-India; National Council of Dalit Christians (NCDC)*).

1. Introduction: Much has been talked about poverty in the national and international context over the last many decades and addressing poverty has become the vital goal both in the developed and developing world. Even in the MDG it has occupied the first place. It is quite natural to doubt that this has become a fashion in the development circles, the best selling object. Further with the modern trend of analysing and addressing issues by fragmenting them and putting into different compartments or components, we started considering the different factors or components of poverty such as hunger, malnutrition, higher Maternal and Infant Mortality, higher morbidity rates, and so on. Looking back we could see that most of our efforts addressing poverty has been on reducing unemployment, improving health standards, feeding the people care for the children, combating trafficking, and so on. However these are the symptoms of poverty, not the causes of poverty. A genuine analysis of the cause of poverty was lacking in our approaches.



2. Recognising Caste:- In the aforesaid context it is important to note the Policy Paper of DFID which says “ caste causes poverty and gets into the way of poverty reduction.....” To understand this position more clearly, we should go for an analysis of the poor and what made them poor. In the context of South Asia, roughly 80% of the poor are Dalits, whose poverty is due to the centuries old caste system and the alienation and marginalisation caused by the caste system.

3. Christian Responsibility: The Christians and Christian institutions are the pioneers in addressing poverty. There also, we find the same lacuna that these institutions fail to address the root cause of poverty- the caste system and are complacent in tackling the symptoms of poverty, apparent from the various projects and programmes of the social service societies and other institutions. The educational institutions run by

Christians often give importance to the catechism but neglect the greatest social issue in Indian Church-the caste system. Justice Ranganath Misra Commission¹ in its report to the Government of India stated that Christianity and Islam are no longer puritan religions in India as they accepted the caste fabrics that existed in India and Christians maintained their caste identity and practice caste and discrimination based on caste. The study by Fr. Lourduwamy² also clearly pointed out the caste practices that exist in the Church. The recent study of Dr. Sathish Deshpande³, it was categorically pointed out that Dalit Christians suffer the same discrimination and alienation as their counterparts in other religions and the conversion has little impact on their social, educational and economic conditions. In the Indian Church 80% are Dalits and they are victims of caste system and continue to suffer caste based atrocities as Dalits. The Constitution Review Committee⁴ found that more than 80% of the atrocities against Christians are suffered by the Christians of Dalit origin. In this background, it is amazing to see how the Church can favourably ignore the issue of caste affecting 80% of the Christian population in India. Hence the Church and church based institutions must come forward to address this issue and sensitise the general population of this issue.

4. Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (WPCU): The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2013 has accepted caste and discrimination faced by Dalits on the basis of caste as the theme of the WPCU 2013. This has the acceptance of Vatican as well as the World Council of Churches (WCC). We can take this as a significant gesture by the Global Church in recognising caste. However, in the WPCU conducted in different parts of India, there was a conscious attempt to ignore this cardinal theme and conducted as a religious observance without any reference to Dalits and caste discrimination. The Church has a moral responsibility to take up this theme put forward by the hierarchy of the Church and take up this in all our deliberations and interventions in future.

5. Role of the Donors: The Dalits form 1/3rd of the Global Poor⁵. Then is it quite natural that they have the right over 1/3rd of the global resources for poverty alleviation. This notion has to be accepted by the international donors-bilateral and multilateral. In this regard the lead has to be taken by the Church based institutions (donors) by making a starting as well as by sensitising others. Though some INGOs and donors have accepted Dalits as one of the focus groups, their approach is feared to be still a beneficiary oriented or symptom oriented rather than addressing the root cause of poverty of Dalits. In this regard a very straight forward approach of addressing caste need to be designed. Much of their intervention and funding are focused on the Non-Dalit organisations and projects that claim to be benefitting Dalits, without focusing on the NGOs and initiatives formed, managed and run by Dalits. Now knowingly or

not, most of the funds allocated for the Dalits are reaching the wrong hands, resulting in further strengthening the oppressors of Dalits rather than promoting Dalits.

6. DALITAID: Understanding the aforesaid lacuna, the Dalit Organisations in India have come forward to form a consortium to address this wrong direction in channelling the global resources for addressing the poverty of Dalits. This platform started in India has a very vivid plan and approach to address the Dalit issue with a different perspective and strategy. To many, Dalits are just an object of study or target recipients of charity and are incapable of starting their own initiatives. *DALITAID* seeks to break these conventional norms. It not only aims at developing the capacity of the members for attempting to attain the competitive funds, but also seeks to demonstrate alternate development plans and approach.

7. A Model Project: *DALITAID* has conceptualised a model development project to be implemented for the Dalit Development in India. After several rounds of discussion, this project was finalised. Accordingly we propose to start a model community development project in Odisha on the outskirts of Khandamal where thousands of Dalits are attached and subject to severe atrocities including murder. The proposed project is an answerer to those who think that Dalits are not able to comprehend the development projects and terminologies associated with it. Under this project it is proposed to create a model township/village with facilities for livelihood (agriculture, industry, services and so on) and centres of education (elementary, technical and higher education), community living, group farming and so on. Dalits from different parts of India will be encouraged to come and stay in the model village and build it as a township in future. The twin approach to address caste discrimination perceived in the project is taming the lion by taking it out of the forest and to enable Dalits to live together and strengthen themselves to fight against the caste system and discrimination which is very difficult if they live in a atmosphere of oppression and discrimination. *DALITAID* is presenting this alternative approach of addressing caste discrimination, to the aid agencies and Church groups to collaborate and take it forward.

8. Conclusion: To conclude, I would like to put forward the following suggestions before the Church groups, aid agencies and other Christian initiatives of UK.

- The prevalence of caste as a menace must be accepted by the Church and Christians and a mindset has to be developed to address caste

- The Church has to be a Church so visualised by Jesus, able to identify and address the social evils that creep in to the Church as well as grow into the world outside. Accordingly church must be in a position to support any initiative against caste discrimination
- A re-reading of the philosophy and approaches of the funding policies of the INGOs and donors is inevitable. The analysis of caste must be accepted by the development circles connected to the Church and recognise this as the root cause of poverty wherever caste discrimination exists
- The Aid agencies and INGOs must accept the fact that Dalits form 1/3rd of the Global poor and that they have the claim over the proportionate share of global resources for their poverty reduction
- The hitherto approach of INGOs addressing the symptoms of poverty must give way to addressing caste discrimination, directly by strengthening Dalits and their initiatives to stand against discrimination.
- The model development project that the DALITAID presents shall be given a thought by the Church and church based institutions, INGOs and donors and must try to chip in their involvement in this historic intervention proposed.

OUR DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE:

Following are some of the instances of our development experience in comparison with that of other major development agencies working for the poor:

	Our experience of others	Our own experience
1	International development agencies (IDAs) say that they came into existence as they are addressing the root cause of poverty.	Our organization came in to existence as a result of the realization that the international development sector does not address caste as a root cause of Dalit poverty.
2	Dalits are a section of the poor.	Dalits are 1/3 rd of the Global poor
3	IDAs receive funds from DFID to educate the UK public on the root cause of poverty and its relationship to the lives of people in the UK.	We addressed Christian Communities who have been contributing regularly to Christian Agencies for over 50 years, but never heard of Dalits.

4	They bring out educational materials, including on global citizenship to educate the UK students and the public.	There is no mention about Dalits and caste discrimination in these educational materials, particularly on global citizenship contents.
5	They do not have any Thematic Area and no proportionate allocation of funds.	Dalits and caste discrimination is the main thematic area of work and resources are mainly used to address the issue of 1/3rd of the global poor.
6	Although the IDAs are for raising the issue of the voiceless and marginalised they were not seen in Dalit campaigns.	Now Our work is mainly to educate the affected UK Diaspora, communities and work with them and their networks in the anti-caste campaign in UK.
7	IDAs are endowed with all facilities to take any campaign forward, but failed to carry DFID's finding on poverty and gets into poverty to different heights.	Worked along with other campaign groups for DFID to come out with the position on Caste, on Caste Causing Dalit poverty and caste coming in the way of their poverty reduction etc.
8	IDAs say that their resources are committed to a few affected countries and their experts are in those countries.	We believe that the issue of Dalits and caste discrimination is an international issue and the world owes a duty to Dalits as they have done to the Slaves the Jews, the Blacks etc.
9	IDAs were consulted by the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) to adapt the WPCU 2013 document according to the UK country situation-but no mention of Equality Act 2010 and share of Dalit Poverty when it talks about IDAs work on global poverty.	Theme of Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2013 is on Dalits and Caste Discrimination. We have used all opportunities to raise the profile of this theme and the present Conference is a result of it.

10	<p>This way IDAs in this country have missed a golden opportunity by not mentioning about the ongoing struggles of the UK Diaspora and other networks. Thus UK Christian communities lost an opportunity to relate poverty and Dalits.</p>	<p>We have pointed out the failures of the lead agencies and those who re-drafted the UK WPCU paper and invited them to speak in this conference, without success. Through this Conference and related work, we worked to provide this opportunity to the UK Christian and international communities in the spirit of WPCU 2013.</p>
11	<p>IDAs who are recognized by Governments as lead agencies for Dalit and caste discrimination admit that they do not have a Dalit Desk/ Consultant/ Expert/ Advisor etc and found them opposing attempts of ‘Dalit specialized agencies’ in calling upon the I/NGO communities to recognize the role of caste as a root cause of poverty and urging them in raising Dalit profile.</p>	<p>We tried to bring special motion through the I/NGO networks calling upon the members to recognize the role of Caste as a root cause of poverty and urge them to raise the profile of Dalits. But was opposed vehemently, mainly under the leadership of Church related IDAs.</p>
12	<p>IDAs generally do not provide Dalits opportunities for international exposure and much needed confidence building and skill training.</p>	<p>Through our work, several Dalit leaders and future leaders were provided with opportunities of international exposure, confidence building to organize and work for their people.</p>

Lessons from CIDSE: (<http://www.cidse.org/content/sectors/rethinking-development/rethinking-development.html>): In this context, it is worth going through the position of CIDSE, which is the International Alliance of Development Agencies of Catholic Bishops Conferences in 17 Western countries.

RETHINKING DEVELOPMENT:



Together, we seek to put forward a more just and sustainable development model.

In the work-area ‘Rethinking Development’ we critically consider the wider framework in which policies to promote development and the fight against poverty are designed and implemented.

CIDSE is convinced that if we are to tackle the roots of global injustice we have to address failures in current models of development and sustainability, global governance and financial systems. Our goal is to contribute to creating an alternative and holistic model of development that puts human well-being at its heart. Our work in this area is organised under the following 5 headings

Beyond 2015: Towards a post-MDG development framework: CIDSE welcomed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as a framework to hold governments accountable, though we remain critical of its limited ambition and failure to embrace the complexity and holistic nature of development. A few years short of the deadline for their achievement, it looks very unlikely that the goals will be fully reached. The question is: what will happen next? We can’t wait until 2015 to start thinking of a new cross-thematic framework for development.

CIDSE is keenly aware of the importance of building on our critique of the development framework, of which the MDGs are the clearest manifestation, and start advocating for alternatives. With this aim, CIDSE joined the Beyond-2015 campaign as part of the steering committee.

Beyond 2015 advocates for a people-led process to the formulation of a post-2015 development agenda and has opened the ground for discussions among civil society organizations and social movements all over the world (e.g. at the 2011 World Social Forum in Dakar and the 2011 European Development Days in Warsaw).

The debates reflect a rich array of views questioning prevalent paradigms on economic growth, development and global governance. Visit the [Beyond 2015 website](#).

Development effectiveness and impact

We aim for increased effectiveness and impact of aid through impact assessment, coordination and strengthening of Southern partners' advocacy.

Effective development cooperation is a fundamental goal for all actors in the development sector. However, current international and national debates on aid effectiveness are more focused on the efficiency of aid in a technocratic manner. CIDSE takes a broader view on aid effectiveness that not only aims at delivering aid efficiently but also focuses on achieving sustainable impact and social change.

CIDSE strives for increased effectiveness and impact of aid through impact assessment, coordination and strengthening of Southern partners' advocacy, informed and inspired by values derived from Catholic Social Teaching. CIDSE agencies define effective aid as aid that:

- Delivers positive impact felt in people's lives.
- Is accountable and promotes learning.
- Focuses on equality of opportunity and rights and reaches the most marginalised/ poor.
- Is empowering.
- Is delivered in coordination with all stakeholders.
- Is sustainable.

Global governance

Creating fair and effective governance of international institutions Global governance is an important cross-cutting issue in CIDSE's advocacy work. In an ever-more globalizing world CIDSE believes that creating fair and effective governance of international institutions is a crucial element in the fight for justice and the eradication of poverty. We urge politicians to take up their responsibility and actively promote reforms of international institutions that are undemocratic, non-transparent, non-accountable and whose legitimacy is questioned.

We advocate for a leading role of the UN in global economic governance and other global issues which affect all citizens of the world.

Policy Coherence for Development (PCD): [development effectiveness](#)

Improving development by preventing harmful impacts in other policy areas.

CIDSE urges policy makers to consider development aims when taking decisions in related areas such as trade, agriculture, finance, environment and governance. Providing aid alone is not sufficient. We can most increase our impact on development by preventing harmful impacts in other policy areas.

While PCD is a cross-cutting issue for all our areas of work, we advocate in particular for the European Union to comply with its PCD targets which are enshrined in the EU Treaties. EU institutions are an important target, because policy areas such as agriculture, trade, climate or finance are either exclusive EU competencies or are increasingly being discussed at EU level.

We want to ensure that the EU makes PCD a policy priority and would like to see it implemented in an appropriate way. This means that we want to stress that “for development” must prevail in “policy coherence for development”. Otherwise, approaches to encourage growth in developing countries, for example, might end up serving EU economic interests, as often happens in the case of natural resource exploitation.

On policy coherence we work in close collaboration with the European confederation of development NGOs CONCORD, of which CIDSE is member. CONCORD publishes a yearly Spotlight on EU [Policy Coherence for Development report](#)

Sustainable development:

We urgently need to put forward alternative models of development.

CIDSE believes that we urgently need to reconsider the current model of growth if we want to achieve sustainability. The current situation in the areas of finance, climate, food and energy all hint at a major global systemic crisis, which reveals the failures of our economic system more clearly than ever. In the context of our fight for global justice and the eradication of poverty, CIDSE recognizes the urgent need to go further in our thinking about alternatives.

Good examples of alternatives and public policy choices already exist. These must become more widespread, scaled-up and built upon. CIDSE advocates amongst others for an alternative to GDP measurement that includes social and non-material aspects of well being. Moreover, we want to put a greater emphasis on 'going local', foster the concept of 'having enough' and debate the role of the 'green economy'.

CIDSE talks about "Together, we seek to put forward a more just and sustainable development model".

Re-thinking Development is in the minds of everyone, especially the IDAs, including CIDSE.

It is in this light, a group of Indian Dalit NGOs who have been actively associated with the National Council of Dalit Christians decided to be form a NGO consortium to work as a sustainable development platform for Dalits, called DALITAID, officially formed Dalit Development Agency with Bishop Neetinathan as its Patron. Last year 3 DALITAID representatives visited 3 UK countries and met with the Catholic Church heads – Cardinal Sean Brady of Ireland, Archbishop Philip Tartaglia of Scotland and Bishop Patrick Lynch of England and Wales – and their Aid Agencies Trocaire in Ireland, Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund (SCIAF). The Report is available in the Website of VODI (www.vodintl.org.uk)

Suggestions:

- UK Church officially recognising the existence of Dalits and caste discrimination as a live issue, both in the UK and internationally.
- Church leaders taking responsibilities for educating all denomination of the Christians, particularly, the UK Catholics / including through 2500+ Catholic Schools in the UK / congregations in parishes / general public and subsequently in India.
- Church related Aid agencies recognising Dalits and caste discrimination as a thematic area in their work and allocating proportionate funding in place to address the issue, both in the UK and internationally along with having Dalit Advisor/ Consultant/ Specialist/ Expert in all or collectively.
- Initiate a campaign like 'Make Poverty History' – 'Make Caste Discrimination History' campaign, involving those entire organisations which are involved and interested in the issue.
- Launch a Model National Dalit Community Development Project in Orissa, India [Central place and where Christian persecution has gained Global attention], as an expression of solidarity to the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2013.

Mr V.J. George is National Convener of National Council of Dalit Christians (NCDC); Trustee of Voice of Dalit International (VODI); General Secretary of *DALITAID* India.

References: Justice Renganatha Misra was the former Chief Justice of Indi and the Chairman of National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities (NCRLM) which studied the social, educational and economic backwardness of the Christians and Muslims of Dalit origin for the conferment of Scheduled Caste status to them.¹

Fr. Lourduswamy is the former Executive Secretary to Catholic Bishops Conference of India, Commission for Dalits, New Delhi, who made a thorough study on the caste practices and caste based discrimination existing in the Catholic Church, collecting data from all over India.

Dr. Satheesh Despande is the Professor in Delhi University. The Ministry of Minority Affairs, Government of India entrusted him to study the social, educational and economic conditions of Dalit Christians and Dalit Muslims. The Constitution Review Committee was appointed by the BJP government to study and submit recommendation regarding the amendments to be made in the Constitution of India.

The Committee also looked into the effectiveness of the provisions of Constitution as well as the statues in combating the atrocities against Dalits.

Voice of Dalit International website gives a detailed justification of this proportion of Global Poor.



15. Christian Responsibility to Dalits and Caste Discrimination

Rt Revd Pete Broadbent,

Bishop of Willesden [Church of England].

My context is North West London, which is the most multi cultural and multi ethnic Episcopal area in the Church of England. It includes, of course, Southall and other major Asian communities. I come before you as a bishop who has a voice in the public realm and where the question of caste discrimination is a difficult and uncomfortable concern which needs to be expressed, both in the context of inter faith and in the context of our own Christian community. The role of a bishop in these circumstances is to attempt to be a voice for the voiceless, but it is not always easy for the voice of the voiceless to be heard. I want to bring four perspectives.



1. The Perspective of Christian Theology

I want to assert that Dalit theology is Christian theology. It is unfortunate that Dalits have had to go the theology of liberation for an understanding of their context. I don't believe that a Marxist analysis does full justice to the way in which Dalits have been oppressed. It seems to me that Dalit theology is about the Kingdom of God and our concern for the poor and voiceless, which is what Jesus, taught us. Recent pronouncements from Pope Francis have echoed this. I want to reclaim Dalit theology and say what the voiceless have said on their own behalf is, in fact, a mainstream concern for the Christian Church. We cannot see our brothers and sisters oppressed and ignored and downgraded by fellow believers (and this is also the case in the inter faith context). Christian concern extends because of our solidarity as Christians. 70% of Christians in the Indian Subcontinent are Dalit. Christian concern also extends because of our love for our neighbour. Caste discrimination crosses faith boundaries and we need to look for the hidden ones and the voices of those who are oppressed in the Christian Church, Hindu Temple and Sikh Gurdwara as well.

2. The Law

There is a lack of evidence for some of the claims that are made about caste discrimination in our country. This is because the way crime recording works is that someone being discriminated against by the virtue of their caste is often recorded as being bullied at school or suffering sexism in the workplace. The reality of the situation is not always, therefore, made available and the extent of the problem of caste discrimination can be easily swept under the carpet.

Mainstream religions are in denial about caste discrimination. I want to bring to your attention to a very hopeful case. The case of *Tirkey v Chandok*. This was a preliminary hearing before an employment tribunal where the claim was made that caste discrimination was taking place and where the judge has allowed that race discrimination includes caste discrimination. This is hopeful from the point of view of future legislation and bringing the full weight of the law to bear on caste discrimination in the UK.

3. Political Will

The politicians have delayed legislation on caste discrimination until 2015. I believe they have parked it because it is too difficult. It is uncomfortable to tackle this issue before an election and, therefore, they have not brought forward legislation based on the amendment moved in the House of Lords which would have included caste discrimination under the terms of the Equalities Act. We need to press politicians not to file this as “too difficult”, but to face the fact that, even though it may cause ructions in some religious communities, the prevalence of caste discrimination must be challenged.

4. Voices and Action

We do need to make caste discrimination visible and this entails speaking out, even in uncomfortable situations. We need to help Dalits and others have the capacity to have a voice in their own communities. This will mean difficult conversations across the Faiths. We have very good inter faith relations in North West London and I recognise that raising a voice on behalf of the oppressed within the different religions may actually be a real challenge and may cause our relationships to be less easy to manage. We need the Church to have both local and international advocacy. Where this issue is already on our doorsteps there is an important need for the Christian Church to speak out on behalf of those who are struggling because of caste discrimination.

16. Group Discussion Reports:

Group Report 1 : Prof. David Mosse

Questions:

1. How can we pursue this issue at the same time ensuring that we do not upset the Hindu community (how to ensure minimising opposition from Hindu community and pursue our issue?)

2. How can we engage with Churches of different denominations?

Key points:

- Hinduism is comprised of many and different denominations, it is not a single religion.
- Why do Hindu groups object to anti-discrimination legislation in UK? (a) They worry that caste is seen as a 'Hindu problem', undermining history of successful integration into British society. (b) They fear that the law will institutionalise caste which is disappearing, especially among young people.
- Caste is a social not a religious thing. There are parallels with class, but with caste there is no mobility. The Indian government's recent Ranganath Misra commission recognised that caste is an unjust social ordering not based on any particular religious philosophy. Changing religion does not allow people to come out of caste.
- India is a Hindu majority country which has passed anti caste discrimination legislation (although it is not enforced) which shows there is no necessary link between Hinduism and caste.
- More needs to be done to communicate with the Hindu community.
- Caste is a reality in Asian communities such as in Southall which divides people (e.g., into separate Gurudwaras) as shown in the testimony of a group participant working for the Church in inter-faith dialogue who is asked about his caste identity and faces challenges bringing different groups together (although here there is more unity among Hindus worshipping in the same temple).
- It is important that the movement against caste comes from within the Asian community in Britain. It will be necessary to build a move against caste from the grassroots, and to think carefully about who to engage with, and how to engage.

- Caste discrimination is a Christian issue too. It is experienced even within Christian religious orders, as personal testimony from group participants showed. There are very few Dalit Bishops in the Indian churches.
- Caste is not a traditional institution that is disappearing. It occurs in modern forms in the Church, in schools and colleges, and in businesses. Some in the group explained that they only came to know about their caste when they applied for a job, or in college or seminaries. Here caste grouping is strong.
- Mobilising young people to fight against caste discrimination is especially important. Young people in India organise against caste through organisations like AICUF (All India Catholic Universities Federation).
- Caste is also a matter of emotion, which is why it is resilient.
- We have to recognise that all are part of the same body of Christ. This does not mean that we deny the different backgrounds, where people come from. The Church needs to give Dalits recognition.

Group Report 2: Dr Meena Dhanda

Qu: How can we pursue this issue at the same time ensuring that we do not upset the Hindu community?

Main points made were:

- That Caste discrimination must be presented as a human rights issue, not as an issue of religion;
- That we must specifically note that Hindus are victims of caste discrimination too;
- Opposition to the legislation comes from lack of legal literacy, public debates in different arenas might correct this lacuna;
- Some Hindu and some Sikh groups wrongly fear that their caste-based community organisations are threatened by the EA 2010. This misunderstanding needs to be addressed.
- Once the scope of the law is clarified, some Hindu organisations might be willing to support the legislation.
- The issue of school curriculum and inclusion of the ‘origins’ of caste in it was queried. Is it necessary to delve into origins of caste, when doing so raises hostile responses?

- Concern about inter-faith work was shared, given that discussion of caste makes some religious groups feel uncomfortably under the spot-light.
- It was suggested that unity can be achieved by focussing on anti-racial discrimination.
- The ‘issue’ must be placed ‘out of religion into race’.

Qu: How can we engage with Churches of different denominations?

- It was pointed out that churches with Punjabi congregations (e.g. in Oxford and Wolverhampton) do not seem to be involved in supporting the legislation against Caste discrimination. Attempts must be made to include them.
- The worship in these churches borders on exclusively non-white; why is it that the ‘white’ congregation does not join in service with the Punjabi congregation?
- The second generation Punjabi Christians are bi-lingual, and for them the Punjabi service is translated into English. For the second generation, more thought needs to be given to making the Churches more inclusive, welcoming Punjabis in ‘mainstream’ Churches and in welcoming non-Punjabis within ‘South-Asian’ congregations.

Note taker: Dr Meena Dhanda.

Group Report 3: Mr Maria Doss

Qu. 1: *How do we convince our Hindu brothers and sisters that our campaign is not against them or against any religion?*

- Listen to them – challenge them.
- Engage with them in serious conversations.
- The issue is socially complexed – be aware.
- Use emails, webs, contacts to communicate our authentic messages.
- Participate in their life, activities like meetings, conferences.
- Engage moderate Hindus into dialogue

Qu 2: *How different Churches and denominations can work together?*

- Churches need to be united in their stand, conviction and activities. It is sad, that even Asian Churches are either deny or indifferent to the issue.

- Churches need to acknowledge their injustice to Dalits and plan for Dalits, for their due share in development
- Parish Churches need to initiate activities and programmes to engage and inspire the wider communities on the issue – influencing from grassroots.
- There are so many activities to raise funds / programmes.
- These occasions by all Churches and church related agencies should be used to educate and make communities aware of the issue of Dalits and motivate them for relevant responses.

Group Report 4: Pastor Raju Mohan Thampi

Qu. 1: *How do we convince our Hindu brothers and sisters that our campaign is not against them or against any religion?*

Qu 2: *How different Churches and denominations can work together?*

- Build awareness
- Minimise their opposition through strategic approach
- Lobbying nationally and internationally
- Referendum
- Sharing of information with each other – congregations
- Involve Hindu leaders in discussions
- Involve all Christian denominations

Annexe 1

Conference Follow up:

All Party Parliamentary Group on Dalits Round Table.

Notes to the meeting: International Development and aid for Dalits

Tuesday 13 May 2014

House of Lords Committee Room 2A

Lord Harries of Pentregarth (Chair APPG for Dalits) &

Lord Alton of Liverpool

Participants:

- | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1. Anand Kumar | <i>Country Director India</i> | Christian Aid |
| 2. Nadia Sarancini | <i>Senior Policy and Advocacy</i> | Christian Aid |
| 3. Davinder Prasad | <i>General Secretary</i> | CasteWatch UK |
| 4. RajMohan Thampi | <i>Pastor</i> | Dalit&Minority
Christian Network |
| 5. Malcolm Egner | <i>Director</i> | Dalit Freedom Network UK |
| 6. David Mosse | <i>Professor</i> | SOAS |
| 7. Gerard Mitchell | <i>Reverend</i> | Christian Network
Against Caste Discrimination |
| 8. Eugene Culas | <i>Director</i> | Voice of Dalit International |
| 9. Santosh Dass | <i>Vice Chair</i> | ACDA |
| 10. Aidan McQuade | <i>Director</i> | Anti Slavery International |
| 11. Sr. Teresa Horrigan | | Presentational Sisters |
| 12. Peter Dunn | <i>Director</i> | Baptist World Mission |

- | | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| 13. Stephanie Atkins | <i>Communications Officer</i> | All We Can/
Methodist Women in
Britain |
| 14. Paul Chitnis | <i>Director</i> | Jesuit Mission |
| 15. Meena Varma | <i>Coordinator</i> | APPG for Dalits |

This meeting was called by Lord Harries and Lord Alton following the conference in February 2014 “Christian Conference and Dalits’ which expressed concern at the lack of international aid agency engagement in South Asia to address the extreme poverty and discrimination faced by Dalits in those countries.

Invitations were sent to all the INGOs which make up the Disaster Relief Committee as well as key Christian aid agencies in the UK. DFID, the FCO and other relevant All Party Groups were also invited.

The meeting heard an overview of the key work being undertaken in South Asia by Christian Aid [CA] India. CA is not a direct implementation agency, but work in partnership with civil society organisations in India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan. Dalits and Adivasis suffer a level of poverty that is the root cause of social, economic, and cultural discrimination and exclusion.

Caste discrimination is a major factor in their programmes which address:

- Livelihoods
- Relief and rehabilitation in emergency relief
- Accountable governance
- Promoting equality

Core programmes:

1. Implementation of legislation with particular regard to the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe (SC/ST) Prevention (and Prohibition) of Atrocity Act. Implementation and conviction rates are less than 5% - mainly due to the mindset of the general populace and the apathy of judicial and political will. Grassroot and local CSOs play a huge role in ensuring access to justice and remedy for victims.

2. Scheduled Caste Sub-component Plan

This ensures the due share of budget allocated for the welfare of the SC/STs - set at 17% SCs and 8% STs. A CA supported coalition is now demanding a national level executive order to ensure that this allocation is met. The funds are all too often diverted at national level for e.g. to meet shortfall in funds for the Commonwealth Games.

3. End Manual Scavenging Campaign. Working with the SKA an organisation headed up by Bezwada Wilson, CA supports a new initiative to ensure compensation for former Manual Scavengers, victims of the heinous practice of cleaning human faces, human sewerage and drain cleaning. (Millions of Indians still defecate in public without any sanitation or other water facilities)

4. Private Sector reservation/Affirmative Action programme

The Private sector in India still opposes any mandatory regulations on affirmative action for Dalits or Adivasis but has moved toward their own voluntary regulatory code. Recent research of the top 100 companies on the Bombay Stock Exchange shows that less than 10% have any SC/ST appointments - nor do they have any mechanisms to implement an affirmative action policy.

Recommendation that DFID should give preference to UK companies investing in India that are willing to implement an AA policy to address caste discrimination.

5. European Commission programme to address caste-based discrimination In partnership with members of the International Dalit Solidarity Network in India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

Participants Inputs:

Paul Chitnis

The Jesuit Mission has been active in India since the 17th Century. Their programmes in Delhi and Uttarkhand have a Dalit focus. The question remains however of how the Jesuits can be more strategic in their work in India to address this issue?

Peter Dunn

The Baptist World Mission in India is Church-based network with programmes on 'Women in prostitution/access to justice and a broader education role/. Would like to see more partnerships in programmes in India and Bangladesh.

Stephanie Atkins

All We Can (formerly the Methodist relief and Development Fund) and Methodist Women in Britain

All We Can has several India-based programmes focusing on Dalit and tribal women- self help groups/micro finance/livelihoods. They hold a meeting where their Indian and African partners come together to share and learn

Aidan McQuade

Anti Slavery International has worked in partnership on Dalit programmes in India and Nepal over several years. Currently they run a programme addressing the issue of bonded labour in the brick kilns of North West India. Over 80% of bonded labourers in India are Dalits

Raju Mohan Thampi

The discrimination faced by of Dalit Christians is threefold – within the church, within the state and within the society.

Eugene Culas

The root cause of poverty is caste-based discrimination and yet it is still not ‘thematized’ by international agencies. There needs to be a ‘Global Movement’.

Malcolm Egner

Dalit Freedom Network has its main focus human trafficking and slavery of Dalits. Over half of the world’s modern-day slaves are in India. DFN has programmes addressing forced trafficking and

Prostitution of Dalit girls ‘sold’ as slaves to the temple gods – a practice known as Devadasi or Jogini.

Meena Varma

As chair of the International Dalit Solidarity Network and working consistently at the international and in country level, stressed the need to address Dalit women as a key focus area – routinely subjected to violence and sexual abuse. Intersectionality between caste and gender.

Dalits are also the last recipients (if at all) in emergency disaster relief. IDSN has produced an excellent report ‘Equality in Aid’, supported by the EU and Christian Aid.

Business and human rights principles may lead to more lasting change as it will need to address caste based discrimination in the South Asia context and whether one is a promoter of Affirmative Action policies or not – this could be one area where we see real change.

Lord Alton referred to the very low conviction rates. How can we raise the bar and hold the judiciary to account. What will be the impact of Modi as PM?

Aidan said that engagement with India had always been a softly approach. We need to up the game – but whatever we do is still a mere drop in the ocean

Santosh asked what is provided under the SC/ST sub-component plan and why is the amount set in that budget not reaching those for whom it is intended.

Sr Teresa was delighted to be at the meeting and has over 30 years working with the poor and excluded in Pakistan

David Mosse – the changing nature of caste and the shrinking space for civil society organisations in India is exacerbated by the changing context of INGOs and the arena they work in – especially due to the decline in funding.

Anand – India’s economic strength has played the key role in UK/US political engagement. The dialogue should not (but foes) link in to trade relations. SC/ST parliamentary candidates and MPs are ineffective and often used as puppets by the ruling parties for political gain.

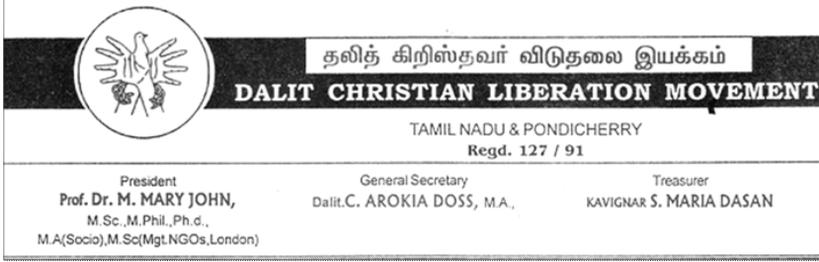
New dialogue initiatives can be considered through, for example, UN Business and Human Rights principles

Summary points for Lord Harries to put in a statement for Government departments and other relevant INGOs who did not attend the meeting

- 1/3 of the global poor are in India – a larger number than in the whole of sub-Saharan Africa
- Caste is the root cause of poverty in South Asia
- Caste and gender

- Caste should be addressed thematically across programmes run by INGOs in South Asia
- UK companies investing in India need to address caste discrimination as a labour rights abuse
- Need for academic research to feed more expertise on the issues
- DFiD/FCO working group to be sensitised on issues
- Interfaith dialogue does not include Dalits
- Global march against caste discrimination on 21 June 2014 in New York.

ANNEXE 2



Memorandum Presented to

His Eminence Cardinal Fernando Filoni, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, the Vatican, on the Occasion of the Silver Jubilee of Shrine Basilica of our Lady of Vailankanni,

Tamil Nadu, India.

9 February, 2013.

Dalit Christians need to be Liberated from the Caste Dominated Indian Catholic Church: An Urgent Task that needs the intervention of Vatican.

Your Eminence

Our warm welcome and fraternal greetings to you from the Dalit Christian Liberation Movement (DCLM). We are happy and grateful to you for this great opportunity and privilege to meet you and share on the urgent and historically important concern and issues of our Dalit Christians in the Indian Church. We are sure that you are meeting us with an open mind and heart and this will be the beginning of a process that will lead to solving Dalit Christian problem finally and justly. Recently we had the opportunity to share these concerns with His Excellency Most .Rev. Salvatore Pennacchio, Apostolic Nuncio in India.

It is necessary that we bring to your esteemed attention the deep rooted Casteism, the multifaceted and multifarious discriminations against Dalits within the Indian Catholic Church. Casteism and caste discrimination are different from other forms of discrimination in the world. It is most inhuman and pernicious which is diametrically opposite to our Christian values. But it is all covered up from the Vatican and world Christianity by the caste hierarchy of the Indian Church. We need to submit a separate paper in detail on the discriminations.

The question of Dalits in India, the oppression, exclusion and the socio, economic and political discriminations have gained considerable international attention and human rights support during the past two decades. The caste issue was visibly raised in the Governments Forum of the member nations in the UN World Conference against Racism held in Durban in 2001. We wish to recall that it was strongly supported by the Vatican Delegation in Governments Forum. The UN Human Rights Commission monitors the Dalit status and the Indian Government's effort through its Committee for Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD). But, the caste issue in the Church is covered up though it is equally serious. In the early times of Christianity in India, Christian converts carrying their caste identity was condoned by Pope Gregory XV (Papal Bull, 31st Jan 1623). It was an imperative that early missionaries faced. But time has changed and we have come a long way in these 400 years since then. **Caste is an international issue today and it is a burning and central issue in the Indian Church which the Vatican needs to address urgently.**

It is heartening that the Churches in the world today, on the joint declaration of the Vatican (Pontifical Council for Christian Unity) and World Council Of Churches (WCC), have taken up the theme of Dalits/ Dalit Christians as the central focus for the "Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2013" (WPCU). Their joint document materials on this so clearly focuses on the great injustices to Dalits in India and in the Church. However, much to be seen at the grounds here to understand the fact of Casteism and discrimination in the Catholic Church and the plight of Dalit Christians within and outside the Church. It is the tradition and practice of the official Indian Church, its hierarchy and authorities to hide the truth on these from Vatican and World Christian community. With this brief background, we bring to you certain concrete issues, without going into much detail.

Untouchability exists in our Indian Christian Community and the Church, practiced overtly and covertly

The prevalence of castes in the Church and discrimination against Dalits needs no more deliberation. But, a lot need to be done to resolve the issue and liberate the Dalits. The statements and declarations by the CBCI and the Catholic Bishops Councils of States, especially TNBC in Tamil Nadu, themselves give ample evidence and acknowledgement for this. The Study and Evaluation Report by the well know research Institute, the Madras Institute for Development Studies (MIDS) sponsored by the MISEREOR and TNBC has given data based evidence. The Commission for the Religious and Linguistic Minorities headed by the former Chief Justice of India, Ranganath Misra, mandated recently by the Union Government of India has eminently brought out the casteism and

discriminations in the Church against Dalit Christians. This has been endorsed also by the National Commission for Scheduled Castes. An independent scientific study by the National Commission for Minorities has also reported the same. The British Parliament has brought the Equity Act 2010 with Section 9(5) a, which defines “**caste as an aspect of race**” to be made illegal. As already mentioned, the recent joint document by the Vatican and WCC has focused on the caste discrimination in the Church and injustice to Dalit Christians. However, the Indian Catholic Church does not care about anything of these.

Untouchability, discrimination and oppression against Dalits in the Church exist in all forms as in the society. The structural form of untouchability is seen in their marginalisation, exclusion and denial of rights. It is often believed, especially by those outside India that casteism and discrimination are not in the Indian Church. But the hard truth is quite the contrary. Caste oppression and domination against Dalits is much stronger in the Indian Church than in the Indian Society. It is because; in the Indian society the majority non Dalits oppress the minority Dalits, whereas in the Indian Church the minority non Dalit Christians oppress the majority Dalit Christians. This truth is not perceived. We need volumes to write on this historical, sociological, religious, cultural reality. **Yet we have remained invisible victims for long because we were passive, not asserting or articulating these, just for the sake of safeguarding the reputation of our World Church and Christianity.**

The Tamil Nadu Bishops Council (TNBC) declared a 10 point programme 20 years before, followed with an 8 point Action Plan 8 years before to eradicate untouchability, discrimination and bring about equality and equal rights to Dalit Christians. But the bishops are not serious about the implementation. Much worse, the congregations and institutions do not even acknowledge these, let alone implementing. The whole things remain as a ‘make-believe exercise’. We can see only some rare exceptions.

Dalit Christians rightful place and due share are blatantly denied in our Catholic Minority Educational Institutions. Church resources are not reaching Dalit Christians.

The Indian Church has enormous material and financial resources and Institutional facilities. But very little of these reach Dalit Christians or used for their development even though they are the big majority and historically oppressed. They are kept at the fringe of these institutions and marginalized in admissions and appointments. The authorities are not willing to give their rightful place and right share. The privileges of minority rights, enjoyed by these institutions are denied to them. It is only

the Christians and non-Christians of dominant castes who are mainly served by our institutions in the name of merit, excellence and standard, like other elitist institutions. The massive network of Christian education institutions does not stand witness to Christ values and mission to the oppressed and poor. Christ was close to these sections with explicit option to their liberation and life. But our leading educational institutions keep them at the fringe in the name of merit /excellence.

Dalit Christians plight is much more serious as the Indian State denied them the Constitutional Scheduled Caste(SC) Rights. It is a religion-based discrimination they are suffering for more than 60 years.

Dalit Christians are fighting against this injustice. It is an enormous right vital for the livelihood and uplift of Dalits which we are loosing for the past 60 years, just for the sake of our Faith. But the Indian Church authorities are not at all worried about it and do not take any serious step. It is really betraying these people.

The government does so much by way of reservation and affirmative action of social and distributive justice through this constitutional SC provision. The central and state governments implement various welfare and development programmes and make allocation in the planned Budget exclusively to Dalits proportional to their population size. But, nothing parallel or similar is done by the Church for Dalit Christians. On the contrary, situation and the practice by the authorities, hierarchy in the Church, the congregations and institutions are largely the negation of whatever the government is doing for the other Dalits. There is no compensatory or positive discrimination policy and system of safeguards for Dalit Christians in the Church and its institutions. Any attempt for this is thwarted.

We are discriminated and excluded by the government because we are ‘Christians’ among the Dalits, and discriminated by the Church because we are ‘Dalits’ among the Christians. We have been suffering this serious double discrimination, not to say of the discrimination suffered in the larger Indian caste society.

Dalit Catholics denied the Vocations and Hierarchical positions. They are prevented in so many ways, are severely excluded from the Leadership in the Church, both religious / ecclesiastical as well as secular.

It is well known that we Dalit Christian are a big majority in the Indian Church. Even the recent Vatican document has put it between 80 – 90% of the Christian population. Dalit Catholics are about 20 million

which is much bigger than the Catholic populations in some countries and bigger than certain cultural Catholic Rite Churches. But we are severely marginalized in the vocations as priests, nuns, in the hierarchical positions of bishops, archbishops, provincials/superiors, etc.

In Tamil Nadu Today, out of 17 Catholic Bishops, there are only 2 Dalit Bishops (i.e., about 80 percent of Catholics having a representation of about 11% in bishops position) with no single Dalit Archbishop. In the all India level, out of about 165 Catholic Bishops there are hardly 6 Dalit Bishops (i.e., 80% of Catholics having a representation of hardly 1% of Bishops), and not a single Dalit Archbishop in India. There has not been a single Dalit Cardinal so far in the history of Catholic Church in India. This situation is outrageous even to an ordinary common sense of proportionality. In Tamil Nadu, Dalit priests who formed about 2% in 1990 are now about 6%, still meagre. The same case with nuns.

In Tamil Nadu Catholic Church we got Dalit Bishops for the first time after several decades, only when our Dalit Christian Liberation Movement took up the issue and demanded through public action in 1990 and after. We got 4 Dalit Bishops which is only marginal. But now there is setback again which is causing a great concern. 4 Dalit Bishops reduced to 2 now, instead of having an increase. In 1990 when we demanded proportional representation for Dalit Bishops it was argued that the Dalit Priests were only a few and Dalit Bishops will be appointed in course of time when Dalit priests number increases. But from 1990 to now, Dalit Priests strength has increased about 3 fold in TN, but the number of Dalit Bishops reduced from 4 to 2. This means, our just cause is not at all given consideration.

We are disappointed and humiliated in the matter of bishops and archbishops appointment. It is clearly a caste domination and manipulation that prevents Dalit Bishops appointment. But, a myth is created or it is explained away by the caste hierarchy and authorities that it all depends on the call of God. Another way is to discredit Dalit priests as not having the skills and qualities needed to be a Bishop. They also justify saying that it is the process and decision by the Vatican. All these are falsehood and the hurdle is Caste caused and Caste is in the way of getting Dalit Bishops, Archbishops, Cardinals, Superior generals, heads of institutions, etc. There is nothing logical or theological in all their explanation for the exclusion of the majority section from the vocation and hierarchy. It only reveals the sociological malady or pathology in the Indian Church caused by caste. We can no longer accept the stereotypes projected about Dalits to deny them equal representation in all these.

We have to emphasize the fact that all Catholic communities in the world are represented by bishops, archbishops of their own community. Europeans are represented by European bishops, The Americans and Africans represented by bishops of their respective country, Tribal community represented by Tribal bishops, and so on. The call of the Holy Spirit is there for every community. We have to look at the history of Church in India. When colonialism was there in India the bishops were all foreign missionaries and Native bishops were not allowed or not appointed. In fact, it was demanded at that time. But when India became independent it was an imperative that only native bishops were appointed as a policy decision. Where is the question of call of the Holy Spirit coming in the way? Why only for appointing Dalit Bishops the argument of call of the Holy Spirit or of qualities is used. Dalit Catholics in India are about 18 million, much bigger than the non-Dalit Catholics in India and the catholic population in many countries who have their own Bishops in sufficient numbers. Why then Dalits are rarely represented by their own Bishops?

In India the Syro–Malankara Church has a population of about 1 million but they have about 9 Syro–Malankara Bishops and also a Cardinal. The Syro–Malabar Church which has a population of about 2.2 million have about 39 Syro–Malabar Bishops, 4 Auxiliary Bishops and a Cardinal. The Tribal Catholics in India are about 1.2 million and they have about 20 bishops and a Cardinal. These are accepted and appreciated positively. But, Dalit Catholics who are about 18 million now and converted centuries before have hardly 6 Bishops in India and not a single Archbishop. There have been about 12 Indian Cardinals so far but, none from Dalit Catholics. How do we accept these? What does it all mean except that it is sheer caste oppression? It simply means that spiritual rights are given to the dominant castes only or it is a spiritual colonization by the dominant castes in the **Catholic Church and Dalit Catholics alienated. The Vatican owes an explanation for this.** If we had the Dalit Church, we will be having now thousands of clergy, hundred and more bishops/archbishops and a few cardinals. We will not face the caste created problem in the matter of vocation.

Today in India other Dalits have attained high positions. There has been a Dalit President of India, A Dalit Chief Justice of India, now a Dalit Speaker of Parliament, A Dalit Chief Minister, a Dalit Home Minister and Ministers. They have gained placed in Indian Administrative services and what not. This is possible because there is Law to protect them from Caste discrimination. But in the Church Dalits are relegated, they could not become Bishops, Superiors and find place in the Church administration. Are we to blame the Holy Spirit for this or the Caste Spirit?

In the ultimate analysis caste comes in the way of Dalits Vocation as Priests and Nuns, and comes in the way of their elevation as Bishops, Arch Bishops, Cardinals, and Superiors etc. When there is the composition of both dominant and weaker sections, positions of authority and the privilege are usurped by the dominant and denied to the weaker section, unless there is systems of safeguards and affirmative policies and actions for the weaker section. **The deep rooted and long standing issues of Dalit Christians cannot be solved without proportional representation for Dalit Christian leaders, priests, nuns and Dalit Bishops / Archbishops at all levels of policy decision making and implementation.**

Religious Congregations and their Institutions also have the tradition of discriminating and marginalizing Dalits.

Situation for Dalit Christians is much worse with the Religious Congregations and their institutions. Their massive network of well established educational institutions are not pro-Dalit or pro-poor. It is the case in Tamil Nadu as well as in the national level. The congregations do not care at all about the policies and action plans declared by the Tamil Nadu Bishops Council for the development of Dalit Christians The world superiors of congregations have to be made aware of this. The Nuncio and the Vatican need to intervene and give directions to them also.

A Dalit Church under the Pope seems inevitable.

With all the experience and encounters of our people in the caste dominated Church that is a counter witness to Christ's values and counter sign for evangelization, we Dalit Christians are compelled to envision to establish a independent Catholic Church of our people directly under the Pope, as a way of our liberation. It is also seen to be a cultural imperative. This thought is wide spread among our people in the past one decade when our struggle for justice is only suppressed and not answered by the caste dominant hierarchy, congregations, and institutions.

The ongoing struggle of Dalit Christians in the Sivagangai Diocese for the past one year and more only strengthens such a view and aspiration. The situation can be aptly described as "our liberators turned our oppressors". It is not only our sufferings, deprivations, discriminations and exclusion. Casteism in the Church is a counter witness to Christ's values of justice and rights to the oppressed and a counter sign for evangelization in India and parts of Asia. This prompts us to envision our own new Church. This was foreseen even in 1920s when the Simon Commission was sent to India by the British government and a deputation of Dalit Christian leaders demanded the Commission that the Dalit

Christians were treated with the general constituency rather than with the Christians constituency. Such was the caste oppression in the Church.

For more than 2 decades now we have explained, represented and appealed so much, but no significant change. Rather there is only attempt and effort to resist overtly and covertly in a calculated way by the caste bishops and clergy. We are powerless within the Church structure to decide or change anything. We are left to constantly struggle or silently suffer. We want peace in the Christian Community, but we cannot subject ourselves to be peacefully oppressed and discriminated. The Church wants at the most to be only charitable towards Dalits. We believe in charity, but we do not want the charity that defeats our justice.

The cruel part or tragedy is that, casteism is reinforced by the clergy, bishops, hierarchy, the religious congregation and the institutions and structures under their control, rather than by the Christian communities and people. They not only deprive us of the resources, institutional facilities, the rights and privilege coming from the Minority right status and above all our leadership in the Church, but also they use these blatantly against us to suppress our legitimate claims. Our liberators are turned our oppressors. The mindset of the official Catholic Church on the whole is inimical to Dalit Christians and poignant. In this situation how can we expect our liberation and equality in the Indian Church? As long as we remain in the caste dominated Church, our spiritual as well as secular rights and progress will be prevented.

The Present struggle of Dalit Christians going on in Sivagangai Diocese is a pointer and it only strengthens their desire for a Dalit Church.

We have written letters to the Nuncio with copies to you on the injustice done to the innocent seminarian Michael Raja by the seminary Rector and Sivagangai Bishop Susaimanickam. It is a grave injustice also to the Dalit Christian community there and that is the reason they struggle against it for more than a year, even though it hurts them economically, mentally and physically.

We wish to fraternally point out that the Vatican may not be part of the caste problem faced by Dalit Christian, but certainly it has to be partners in resolving it. The Caste problem in India needs to be approached with the knowledge and consciousness of its history. Dalits cannot get full liberation without the international intervention. Much in the same way Dalit Christians need particularly the intervention of the Vatican.

We need to learn lessons from the experience of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the emancipator of the Dalits in India.

Dr. Ambedkar the liberator of Dalits and the father of the Indian Constitution, could win the constitutional and legal safeguards/protections and reservation rights during Independence of India, not because of the caste minded Indian leaders, but because of the understanding and strong support of the British Government, its parliamentarians and administrators. The two Roundtable Conferences in London and the enumerable communications and representations of Ambedkar with the British government, its various Commissions prior to Independence paved the way for achieving important constitutional and political safeguards to Dalits in India. But, even Dr. Ambedkar and the Indian constitution could not save Dalit Christians at that critical juncture, mainly because of the negligent attitude and boasting of self-righteousness of the Church hierarchy (that there is no castes in the Church), joined by some vested interests against the religious minorities. What applies to Indian society applies to the Indian Church also. But when the European and foreign missionaries left India, Dalit Christians were left to the caste authorities without any safeguards. **The Indian Church is not going to be kind to us Dalit Christians if we cannot work and do things for ourselves.**

As already pointed out, the caste question has gained international attention and engagement by international Organizations/Bodies. It is a historically and structurally rooted problem in the Church just as in the Indian Society. The most sad and ironical thing is that, demanding or even speaking about Dalit Christians dignity, equality or equal rights in the Church is looked upon as a taboo by our hierarchy, clergy, our institutions and authorities. It is time that Dalit Christians speak up on their own behalf and on their own right. **Some strategic intervention of the Vatican is necessary and inevitable to deal with the Caste issue in the Church. We need to start a process with a number of steps. We propose the following for urgent consideration and action.**

(i) **A Vatican Commission** can be formed with a mandate to take up the issue of Dalit Christians in the Church, to assess the status and conditions from various sources, including visits to Dalit Christian villages, interaction with them and Dalit Christian leaders and to recommend policies and programmes.

(ii) **An audience with Holy Father the Pope** to a Delegation of Dalit Christian leaders and movement. It will restore the trust in the victim Dalit Christians, make the hierarchy here serious about the problem. **A Papal Bull** denouncing casteism in the Church will be reinforcing these.

(iii) **A Dalit Christian Desk** needs to be constituted in the Vatican with representation of Vatican officials, Dalit Christian leaders and priests and a Dalit bishop and. This can promote effective interventions by the Vatican and the World Congregations of the Religious and help to monitor the implementation of policies and progress for Dalit Christians.

(iv) **A conference of the World Superiors and Generals of Religious Congregations need to be organized soon.** They need to be made aware of the Dalit Christian problem and given some direction by the Vatican to implement a preferential option for Dalits. With their massive network of educational and technical institutions, the congregations and can play a greater role in this. But they don't have the policy. The bishops themselves express their inability to make them comply with and accountable in this regard. The intervention of the superiors/ generals is needed to change the situation. As the first step to facilitate this, Vatican need to organize a conference of the national and world Supervisors/Generals, and Dalit Christian leaders for formulating policies and action plan. Your Eminence/Vatican can first send a letter to all the national superiors/generals to raise concern on our representation.

(v) Vatican has to find ways and take a special drive for **appointing Dalit Bishops** in good numbers in the next 3 years both in Tamil Nadu and in other states so that at the national level there is a fair representation. This will be an important indicator of justice and equality for Dalit Christians and their confidence building. The Vatican has to find ways and take a special drive for appointing Dalit catholic bishops.

These will be coinciding and keeping in with the focus of the “Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2013” on the issue of justice and development for Dalits to be observed throughout the year, backed by the document of the Vatican and WCC. It is appropriate to recall here that **Holy Father Pope John Paul II expressed deep concern about the casteism in the Indian Church during the Ad Limna Visit of the Indian bishops in November 2003 and appealed to them to give always a special attention and care for the equality and life of Dalit Christians. Also, in the Christmas Eve 2012 Mass, Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI lamented CHRISTMAS’ ‘Superficial Glitter’. He urged the faithful to look beyond to discover its true meaning, the message of Christ’s birth. He also gave the call “let us speak out for those who have no voice”. That is what we are asking in the case of Dalits. The social teachings of the Church have particular relevance to the situation of Dalit Christians in the Church.**

These need to be followed up by a number of meaningful and practical steps as suggested above.

Your Eminence, this is the least we can say at this moment. It is a continuing historical problem that we are deeply concerned and we need to continue our dialogue and discussion. Neither we can share everything nor could you absorb everything in one sitting. You need to study this paper and our other recent communications. We believe that our meeting with you today is a beginning for a continuous process and collaboration to resolve Dalit Christian problem. Any critical view from your side or from the Indian hierarchy is welcome and should be known and we will be obliged to explain and clarify.

Finally, we have to make a very special appeal on the burning issue that is going on in Sivagangai diocese, as we understand the matter has been referred to you. The Dalit seminarian Michael Raja, who was dismissed by the wrong decision of the seminary rector and bishop Susaimanickam, has to be reinstated in the diocese. We have written all about it to the Nuncio with copy to your Eminence. Now after a year the bishop is telling the people that the matter has to be decided by the nuncio and Vatican. This is just creating misunderstanding between the people and the Nuncio/Vatican. The people are anguished as they are struggling for more than a year which is likely to escalate, if it is not resolved soon. He should get justice. We request your intervention for this.

We thank your Eminence once again for this opportunity to share with you and for your patient hearing. With the hope of getting our justice,

We remain yours sincerely in Christ.

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Prof. Dr. M. Mary John | State President, DCLM |
| 2. Dalit C. Arokiadoss | General Secretary, DCLM |
| 3. D. Daniel | Treasurer, DCLM |
| 4. Janatha Arockiasamy | Vice-president, DCLM |
| 5. P. Santhanadurai | State Advisor, DCLM |
| 6. R. Simieon | President, DCLM Tanjore |
| 7. Dalit A.S.A. Doss | Public Relations, DCLM |
| 8. Advo. Albert Rayan | Legal Advisor, DCLM Tanjore |
| 9. Advo. Henry | Legal Advisor, DCLM Tanjore |
| 10. Ms. Thamizharasi | Women wing, DCLM Tanjore |
| 11. Singarayar | DCLM, Nagai Vicariate
Coordinator. |

12. Aro Stephenraj

Convener, Dalit Christian
Federation, Sivagangai.

Copy to:

Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, the Secretary of State to the Pope, Vatican.

Cardinal Peter Kodwo Appiah Turkson, Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace.

His Excellency Most Rev. Salvatore Pennacchio, Apostolic Nuncio in India, Delhi.

Cardinal Telesphore P. Toppo, President of CCBI.

Cardinal Oswald Ggracias, President of CBCI.

Cardinal Mar George Alencherry, Syro-Malabar Catholic Church.

Cardinal Moran Mor Baselios Cleemis, Syro-Malankara Catholic Church.

Bishop Dr. A. Neethinathan, Chairman, CBCI Office for SC/BC.

Bishop Peter Remigious, President of TNBC, TN.

Rev. Fr. Albert Nelson, Secretary, TNBC Office for SC/ST, Trichy, TN.

Rev. Fr. Devasagayaraj, Executive Secretary, CBCI Office for SC/BC, Delhi.

ANNEXE 3

Letter of Indian Bishops Delegation to

**The VATICAN
ROME, ITALY.**

Your Holiness,

*Sub: Mission of the Church and Dalit Catholic Empowerment
Greetings from Dalit Catholic Community form India.*

We praise and thank Our Lord for having blessed Holy Church with Holy Father His Holiness POPE FRANCIS. The Catholic Church found a Pope, committed to the liberation of the oppressed from Argentina; the land of Marginalized Communities. It has brought in a new source of energy and hope to the oppressed people of the world. U.S. President Barack Obama said in a statement “As a Champion of the poor and most vulnerable among us, he carries forth the message of love and compassion that inspired the world more than 2000 Years.... than in each other, we see the face of God”. We consider His Holiness is our Liberator.

In choosing the name Francis, in association with Little Brother St. Francis of Assisi, a symbol of poverty, simplicity and peace, your image brings us confidence of regaining our lost divine Image. We, the Dalit Catholics, who suffer disabilities and discriminations in the Society as well as in the Church place before your kind self our prayers for appropriate action.

Scheduled Caste converts to Christianity (Dalits) in India are thrice discriminated community. They were treated as untouchables in the society and after conversion, they suffer discrimination in the Church on the basis of Caste. The Government of India also denies Scheduled Caste rights and constitutional privileges to Dalit Christians due to their conversion to Christianity. They continue to live in deep faith and witness for values for gospel even after the denial of rights in the church. The racism on the basis of color in the world was abolished and Africans achieved freedom and equal rights, but Dalits in India suffer all the disabilities due to the traditional practice of untouchability. This discrimination on the basis of Caste is existing in all the religions and it is inseparable from Indian beings.

In India all the communities practice Caste but the victims are Dalit community. The Caste people consider that it is their religious duty “Dharma” to oppress the Casteless and outcaste untouchable communities. Therefore, when the power is given to dominant Caste leaders they always suppress the emerging leadership of the marginalized community. The powerful Catholic leaders will not have the sense of sharing the leadership with downtrodden. Therefore, His Holiness is requested to promote Dalit ecclesiastical and hierarchical leadership as a sign of compassion and concern towards the oppressed people.

A memorandum of Dalit Catholic community to His Holiness on mission of Church and empowerment of Dalit Catholic community is enclosed with this letter to describe about the plight and the need of the target people. Let your virtue of poverty and love for the poor inspire the Church leaders in Vatican and in India to be at the service of the poor and Dalit community. May the heads of the congregation in Vatican, Apostolic Nuncio in India and other Church leaders understand the sufferings of the oppressed people and assist them to attain empowerment.

In this year of faith, we pray that the appropriate action of your Holiness shall bring the liberation to the oppressed and empowerment to the powerless community in India.

Your faithful and oppressed Children,

Dalit Bishops, Priests, Religious and laity.

Most. Rev. A.M. Chinnappa SDB

Most. Rev. Antonysamy Neethinathan

Most. Rev. Soundarajan Periyarayagam.SDB

Rev. Fr. S. Lourduwamy

Copy to:

1. His Eminence Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, Secretary of State, Vatican – Rome.
2. His Eminence Cardinal Fernando Filoni, Prefect, Congregation for evangelization of people.

***Vatican- Rome
14th June 2013***

Memorandum of Dalit Catholic Community to Holy Father His Holiness Pope FRANCIS

MISSION OF THE CHURCH AND EMPOWERMENT OF DALIT

The caste system survived for centuries in India because the Aryans and Hindu religious leaders attributed the caste system to divine ordinance. Any violation of this system individually or collectively was declared as crime by the divine law. The caste system has been sanctified by Hindu Scriptures and it was accepted even by the outcastes themselves.

I. CASTE SYSTEM IN INDIA

Caste in India is a social institution and social stratification deriving sanction from Hindu Religion. Caste system has survived in India more than 3500 years. The word Caste comes from Portuguese word ‘Casta’ signifying ‘breed or race’. Ketkar defines Caste in his book “History of Caste in India” (p.15) as “membership confined to those who are born of members and include all members so born”. The members are forbidden by an inexorable social law to marry outside group. Each group has a special name by which it is called. Several of such small aggregates are again grouped together under one common name.

Caste system was introduced to the Indian history by Aryans who invaded India in BC 1500. The Hierarchical Caste System was attributed to God’s creation. In the traditional understanding the Caste system is derived from Varna system, which has the foundation in Rig-Veda. X 90.12 Mandala describes the creation of different groups from Purusha, the primordial being. *Purushasukta (Hymn of Man in Rig-Veda)* speaks about Varna as the origin of the Caste system. “The Brahmana was his mouth; both of his arms were Ranjanya (Kshaktriya); his thighs became the Vaishya and from his feet the Shudra was produced. (Griffith Ralph, The Hymns of Rig-Veda, p.603) The people outside of Chatur Varna were called outcastes. Aryans called them Dasas (Dark people), *Punchama* (fifth order or outcastes) *Avarna*, *Chandala*, *Antayas*, *Shvapaka*, *Meda* etc.

The term *Dalit* in Sanskrit is both a noun and an adjective. As a noun, Dalit may be used for all three genders, masculine, feminine and neuter. It has been derived from the root *dal*, which means to crack, open, split, and so on. When used as noun or adjective, it means burst, split,

downtrodden, scattered, crushed, destroyed. The present usage of the term Dalit goes back to the nineteenth century when Marathi social reformer and revolutionary Mahatma Jotirao Phule used it to describe the outcastes and untouchables as the oppressed and broken victims of the Indian caste-ridden society. Dalits have their history and roots. They are the descendants of the early settlers of India and could be called the indigenous people of Indus Valley. Archeological evidences and literary sources are available to prove the historical roots of Dalits. The famous Harappa & Mohanjodaro excavations between 1920-1951 and early Vedic literature like Rig-Veda Hymns bring out the history of Dalits. Evidences from early literature and Archeological findings prove conclusively that the civilized people who lived in the Great Indus Valley were subjugated and made untouchable by the conquerors. In 1919 Govt. of India Act calls them Exterior Caste. In 1931 they were named Untouchables. Gandhiji gave them the name *Harijan* which was not accepted by Dalit people themselves. Govt. of India Act 1935 declared them as Scheduled Caste and they were included as beneficiaries of Political Reservation in the Govt. of India Scheduled Caste Act 1936. Today Dalit people are proud of declaring themselves as Dalits.

A. Oppression

The Caste system survived for centuries because the religious leaders transmitted the Hindu scriptures to the common people attributing the Caste system to divine ordinance. Any violation of this system, individually or collectively, was tantamount to breaking the divine law (Manu code). Painstakingly, every dimension of the divine ordinance of Caste was included in the scriptures. The Caste system having thus been sanctioned by scriptures came to be accepted even by the outcastes themselves.

Untouchability is being practiced in the Hindu society now for almost 3 millennia. Various reasons are given justifying the practice. The main causes were the obsession of the Brahmins to maintain purity and to avoid pollution. Purity is the essence of the Caste system. The Brahmins used name of God and the scriptures to establish this Caste system (Varna Dharma), In order to maintain the hegemony of the society.

B. Assertion

The History of Caste system in India is a record of a perpetual social tension and revolts against prevailing social code. Though the Caste system is a rigid stratification of social groups, today due to modernization and westernization there can be seen mobility among the castes. The process of social change has started. Education has brought socio-economic and cultural mobility in several areas. Constitutional safeguards,

legal protection like SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act are shielding them. Reservation privileges are paving way for their development. Dalits are conscious of their rights and identity and assert their human dignity and equality. They are determined to regain their lost identity and make attempts to become a powerful community.

In India of today, Ambedkar movements, Dalit liberation movements, SC/ST employees unions and various other associations reject the unjust Brahminical order and assert their rights for liberation and empowerment.

In the Church also, Dalit Christian Liberation Movement (DCLM), Christian Dalit Liberation Movement (CDLM) of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka Dalit Christians Federation, Kerala Dalit Christian Mahasabha, United Christians Movements of Equal Rights of Andhra Pradesh, National co-ordination committee for Dalit Christians and other movements in North India also demand equal rights. They struggle to restore the image of God in them and others.

II. PLIGHT OF DALIT (SCHEDULED CASTE) CHRISTIANS

Dalit includes all Scheduled Castes with its sub-Caste groups. All Scheduled Caste converts to Christianity are called Dalit Christians.

A) Multiple Disabilities and Discriminations:

1. Social Disability:

Dalit Christians continue to live in the same segregated place, in the same “Cheri, colony or slum”, even two generations after becoming Christians. A Dalit Christian is not given the luxury of a new environment. The Dalit continue to work in the villages for low wages for their masters, enduring tyranny, abuse, beatings and killings. Their wives and daughters face molestation, rape and burning of huts and killing of their children during atrocities. Dalit remains a Dalit in every sense of the word ethnically, lineally, racially, socially, economically, culturally, geographically, relationally, contextually, and emotionally. They are equally victims of atrocities but they cannot protect themselves by SC/ST pretensions of atrocities law because they are not deemed to be Scheduled Caste.

The victims of atrocities against Dalits are Dalit Christians in Neerukonda Saukarankulam, AP (July 1976), Villupuram, TN (11th December 1980), Karamchedu, AP (March 1985), T. Sundur (1993), Koldiangulam (October 1995), Sankaralingpuram (2001) and in hundreds of other Dalit Villages. These are irrefutable evidences.

Baba Sahib Dr. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi made statements that

Dalit remains a Dalit which ever religion he embraces. The backward class commissions like Kaka Kalekar Commission (1951), Kumar pillai Commission (1965), Elayaperumal Commission (1969), Sattanathan Commission (1970), Chidambaram Commission (1975), Mandal Commission (1982), and Mandal Case Judgment (1992) proved that the disabilities of Dalit Christians in the society and Church. National sample survey of ISI (1986) Indian Social Institute, conducted by Dr. Jose Kananaikil, the Director of Institute prove that SC convert Christianity suffer more socio-educational and economic disabilities than the non-convert Dalits.

2. Educational Disability:

The lack of economic resources for Dalits Christians is one of the main reasons for their poor literacy. The upper caste attitude towards the Dalit Christians and the low self image of themselves are also reasons for poor education. While there may be progress in the field of elementary education, the converts have not made much progress in the field of high school or college education as their Hindu brothers. The same spirit or renaissance which animates the Hindu Scheduled castes has not spread to the Christian sections.

Dalit Christians students dropout from school due to lack of motivation and poverty. They don't have access to the English Education and Computer studies. Many Church Bodies also refuse to admit Dalit Children in order to keep up merit and prestige of Institution.

All India Association forum for Christian Higher Education (AIACHE) made the survey of the number of SC students in the Church run Colleges of India (2001) and found out the percentage students is 7.8% and that of ST students is 5.22% in the total number of 271 Colleges in India.

3. Economic Backwardness:

Majority of Dalit Christians are landless labourers, finding it difficult to maintain their family with the limited income. They borrowed loans to meet their needs. Migrant worker in big cities, child labourers, low class workers, are generally found to be Dalits. According to the survey made by Rev. Fr. Antony Raj, SJ (Discrimination against Dalit Christians in Tamilnadu, 1989), 45% of the community are living below the poverty line and not able to meet the basic needs.

4. Discrimination in the Church.

Caste system is inherent in Indian Society and Ingrained in Indian psyche. Caste discrimination and hatred are found in the Christian Community in

all the spheres because it is perpetuated in the Society. Dalits are victimized and deprived of their due participation in the administration of the Church. CBCI made repeated appeals for development of Dalit Community. However discrimination is practiced in the liturgical worship, graveyard, celebration of patron's feast, parish administration and vocations for priests and religious etc. **Though Dalit Catholics form 65% of Indian Catholic population only 5% representations is found in clergy, religious and hierarchy of Indian Church. This is clear evidence of discrimination.** Inter dining and intermarriages are still not possible between Dalits and Caste people in the Christian Community.

In the message during Adlimina visit of Indian Bishops on 17th November 2003 at Rome Holy Father **Pope John Paul II made very sharp observations on Dalit realities in India** "The unjust system of caste division denies the human dignity of entire group of people. You must continue to make certain and special attention to Dalit Christians. They should never be segregated from other members of society. Any semblance of a caste-based prejudice in relations between Christians is a countersign to authentic human solidarity, a threat to genuine spirituality and a serious hindrance to the Church's mission of evangelization. It is the Church's obligation to change hearts helping all people to see every human being as a Child of God, a brother or sister of Christ, and therefore a member of our family". Holy Fathers call and caution regarding abolishing discrimination should be followed by Church.

5. Discrimination by the Government:

All the Backward class commission, including Shri Misra Commission proved the fact that Christians of Scheduled Caste origin suffers the same socio-educational and economic disabilities on par with their counterparts in other religions due to traditional practice of untouchability and the change of religion does not change the social, educational and economic status. Therefore the Government was asked to confer S.C. Status to S.C. Converts to Christianity. But presidential Order 1950 (para 3) denies Scheduled caste Rights to the S.C. converts to Christianity on the basis of religion. It is gross violation of Articles 14, 15/4, 16/4, 25, 46, 330, 341 of the Indian Constitution and Art. 18 of Universal Declaration on Human Rights by UNO.

1) Denial of Scheduled Caste Rights:

The president was empowered by the Article 341 (1) to enlist the Scheduled Castes only for the purpose of statutory benefits but he brought religion as criteria to define Scheduled Caste. Whereas constitution

extends privileges of S.C on the basis of Caste only. In contradiction to Article 341, he promulgated Constitution (Scheduled Caste) Order 1950 stating in para 3 “*Notwithstanding anything contained in para 2, no person who professes a religion different from Hinduism shall be deemed to be a member of scheduled Caste*”. It discriminates Dalit Citizens of India on the basis of religion and denies fundamental Right of freedom of Religion and Conscience to Dalit converts to Christianity and Islam. Therefore this order is communal and violation of Art 25.

The Parliament has rectified this lacuna arising out of the para 3 of the order by amending the Constitution (Scheduled Caste) Order 1950 and included Sikh religion in 1956 and Buddhism in 1990. However, Christians of Scheduled Caste Origin were not included. This discrimination deprives the Christian Dalits to seek civil protection and safeguards provided for all Dalits under Protection of Civil Rights Act 1976, Untouchability (Offenses) Act 1955 and SC/ST (prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989. This is a blatant violation and denial of Human Rights constitutional rights of a citizen under Indian Constitution.

2) *A Demand for Scheduled Caste Rights to Christian Dalits:*

In the past 60 years the Christian Community in India made efforts for obtaining equal Rights to Dalit Christian. Dalit Christian (Scheduled Caste Converts to Christianity) is denied their Constitutional Rights, Human Rights, Fundamental Rights and Social Justice by the Constitution (Scheduled Caste) Order 1950 on the basis of religion. The Scheduled Caste rights such as (a) the provision for Reservation in Education, Employment, (b) Reservation in Parliament and assembly (c) Statutory and non-statutory benefits, (d) socio-educational and economic benefits, (e) The privilege of protection during atrocities that are enjoyed by Dalits in Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism are denied to Scheduled Caste (Dalit) Converts to Christianity. Though Dalit Christians suffer the same socio-educational and economic disabilities on par with their counterparts in other religions, they are not recognized as the member of Scheduled Caste. Hence the Scheduled Caste Order 1950 should be amended either deleted or suitably amended in order to confer SC Status to Dalit Christians. The Demand of the Church through various demonstrations and programmes for Justice has been justified by Commissions appointed by Government, Judiciary, Legislature and successive Government but justice is being delayed due to craze for political will is lacking. This Human Rights issue has been converted into a political issue by the Government.

III. THE CHURCH AND DALITS

1. Rejection of Caste by Religious/secular leaders.

Indeed, the rejection of caste by other religious communities and leaders preceded that of the Christian Church, even by centuries. The Buddha, himself born into the kshatriya caste, rejected ritual purity, which is the essential marker of caste, as the path to liberation and enlightenment. He made his “Middle Way” available to everyone and admitted all, even women and the outcastes, in to his monastic community (sangha).

Bhakti Hinduism produced numerous saints and poets, both male and female, such as Kabir, Nanak, Raman and, and Ravidas, who delivered strong messages about the equal access to God and the evils of the Caste system. Such teachings were further disseminated when Bhakti Hinduism received the patronage of the Gupta dynasty (A.D. 320-540), often called the classical age of India. Other Indian religions that combat the caste system include Jainism, which insists on radical ascetism as the way to liberation from the bondage of Karma, and Sikhism, which explicitly advocates the abolition of castes. in general, it must be said however the main efforts of these religious movements and leaders were to reform Hinduism from within and not to change the socio- political and economic structures that oppressed the Dalits.

Among non-Christian leaders who have sought to destroy the caste system, the names of Shree NarayanaGuru (1854-1948), Periyar E.V.Ramaswamy (1879-1948), Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), and Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar (1891-1956) deserve special mention.

2. Prevalence of Caste Practice in Christianity.

The Caste practice is tolerated and accepted by all the groups in the Church.

The Diocese of Goa was established in 1534. The Portuguese missionaries focused on upper caste conversions believing that inferior castes would follow later. Jesuit Francis Xavier arrived in Goa 1542 and preached in the coastal area. Mass conversions occurred on Coromoundel coast. This was opening for Dalit Conversions. Jesuit priest Robert De Nobili came to India in 1602 and established Roman Catholic Madurai Mission and he was followed by the great Missionaries John De Britto and Joseph Constantine Beschi who contributed a lot for growth of Church in seventeen and eighteenth Century in India. Jesuit Missionary Robert De Nobili changed this Missionary policy and followed Malabar rite, Hindu upper Caste symbols. It included acceptance of the smearing of ash or

sandal wood paste on forehead and use of Brahminical sacred thread etc. He restricted his evangelization only to Brahmins and believed in top to bottom conversion. He was the cause for entry of caste system into the Church. He accepted caste system of upper caste converts. He not only introduced Dalit distinction between high caste and low caste but also separate churches. He went to the extent of dividing missionaries into Brahmins Sanyasis who ministered high castes and Pandaraga swamis to minister the Dalits. They were following the policy of accommodation of caste system in Christianity. Caste system was considered as social factor and it is compatible with Christianity identity.

The Bull of Pope Gregory XV, “Bulla Romanae Sedis Antistetes”, dated 31st January 1623, accedes to the requests of the missionaries to accommodate themselves to certain caste practices and customs of the new converts. The Pope was granting this permission only as a provisional and conditional measure. It was given to Madurai Mission as response to the demand of Rebert De Nobili.

3. Agitation against Caste oppression

Dalit Christian community agitated against discrimination in Catholic Church. Toleration of Caste practice in the Course of history grows into Caste discrimination in all the levels; therefore, oppressed people agitated against oppression in many places in India. Synod of Pondicherry was conducted in the year 1844 itself to foster harmony between Dalit Christians and Caste Christians. Scheduled Caste (Dalit) Christian welfare association sent a memorandum on 15 Jan 1925 to then Vicar Apostolic to India Bishop Alexius Maria Henry Lapier regarding the discriminations of dominant Caste. Dalit Christians Liberation movement (DCLM) has been fighting against the Caste practices from 1980 onwards and demanded Equality and Justice. Hence, the Church was pressurized to declare programmes and action plan for the integral development of Dalit Christians.

4. Statements of National and Regional Bishops Conferences.

In response to various demands of people the Indian bishops issued a forceful statement condemning the caste system at their meeting at Tiruchirappalli **in 1982**: “we state categorically that caste, with its consequent effects of discrimination and “caste mentality” has no place in Christianity. It is in fact a denial of Christianity because it is inhuman. It violates the God-given dignity and equality of the human person. God created man in his own image. Thus, human dignity and respect are due to every person and any denial of this is a sin against God and man. it is an outright denial of the fatherhood of God which in practice renders meaningless the brotherhood of man”.

Again, in **1988**, the Indian Bishops declared at their CBCI general meeting in Kottayam: “Most Christians of SC origins are still deprived of economic opportunities, access to adequate educational facilities, leadership roles and participation in decision making. Therefore integration of Christians of SC origin is the mainstream will be for us a top priority”. In **1992**, the Indian Bishops noted in Pune CBCI declaration that the demands of the Dalits could be classified in to three categories and must be met: those regarding socio-economic benefits, jobs, education, and housing; empowerment of the Dalits within the Church; and personal respect. The statement of CBCI general body meeting at Varanasi, March 1998 says, “The discrimination against anybody on the basis of Casts is a sin against God and Humanity. this needs to be proclaimed from the housetops so that caste system will be removed from Christian community totally as part of our preparation for **Yesu Kristu Jayanti 2000.**” it is also proposed six important action plans to be implemented for empowerment of Dalit Christians.

In 1990, the Tamil Nadu Bishops Council launched a Ten-point program, a sort of a magna carta for the empowerment of Dalit Catholics. It aimed at removing discrimination against the Dalits in all areas of life. it called for the elimination of Discrimination against the Dalits in places of worship and burial grounds, recruitment of priestly and religious vocations among the Dalits, participation of the Dalits in the decision-making process at both the diocesan and parish levels, admission of more Dalits to schools and vocational training centres, special assistance to Dalit students, preferential appointment of Dalits in Church-sponsored institutions and organizations, special projects for the social developments of Dalits, special scholarship funds for Dalits, establishment of a committee for Dalit affairs in every Diocese, and vindication of human rights for the Dalits. The years 1990-2000 was considered the Dalit decade. Unfortunately, by 2004, it was acknowledged that much of the ten-point program had not been achieved, and in 2004, it was re-launched, this time with concrete and specific initiatives, designated persons and organizations to implement them, and periodic monitoring and evaluation of ongoing progress.

IV. MANDATE OF GOD AND MISSION OF THE CHURCH.

1. Jesus, the Liberator

Church in India has been tolerating prevalence of discrimination in the Church and it is not engaging in concerted and continuous actions for Dalit liberation because of wrong understanding of what Bible teaches. Therefore re-reading of the Bible for Dalit liberation is very necessary. This Biblical hermeneutics should lead into a genuine theology for Dalit liberation.

Jesus' solidarity with the victims of oppression and exploitation was born out of his compassion and genuine concern for them. This is in accordance with the mission. Priority of Jesus, as it is made clear in the Nazareth Manifesto **"Spirit of the Lord is upon me because He has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the Captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour". And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to attendant and sat down. The eyes of all in the Synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk 4:18-21).**

Jesus' way of liberating the marginalized and the oppressed is by identifying with them in their existing situation through his friendship and fellowship with them and enabling them to affirm their identity and rights. Thus the touch of Jesus and the fellowship of Jesus empowered the. Dehumanized sections of the community. Jesus' solidarity with the marginalized and the oppressed reminds one of the corporate Christology Judgment of God in **Mt.25:31-46**, where the Son of Man identifies with the sick, the prisoner, the stranger and the hungry. Christ's presence in the midst of the suffering masses, sharing their pain and sorrows, motivates every follower of Christ to identify this Christ and work for the liberation and empowerment of the poor and the marginalized.

Jesus accused his opponents of hypocrisy when they questioned his healing on the Sabbath. In all the three episodes we find that the reason for Jesus' confrontation with the oppressors is their role in the discrimination, oppression and exploitation of the marginalized and the underprivileged in the society. The non-Dalits attribute hereditary impurity' to the Dalits by calling them 'avarnas', 'antyajas', 'panchamas', 'exterior castes', 'outcastes', 'depressed classes', 'scheduled castes', 'harijans' and 'untouchables'. The Dalits prefer to define themselves as 'Dalit', since the word connotes the consciousness of their own unfree existence and outcaste experience. They are persecuted as 'no-people' and sub-humans by the upper strata. This reality of Dalit oppression must be exposed along with all the forces and institutions that are responsible for it. It is high time the Dalit liberation struggle shifts its focus to those who oppress them, exposing them and challenging them in all possible ways. The way Jesus confronted the oppressors of his time provides a model for Dalit liberation.

The conversation between the Dalit world and the Biblical world provides us some insights for the Dalit liberation struggle. It challenges the non-Dalit followers of Christ to show solidarity with the Dalits in their struggle for justice and freedom. It empowers the Dalits to affirm their self-identity and right to self-determination on the one hand and challenges

them to work for the transformation of the oppressors and abolition of the dehumanizing laws.

The encounter between the Dalit world and the Biblical world presents before us a portrait of a confronting, angry Christ, who is corporally and corporately present among the suffering humanity. The dialogue between the Dalit world and the Biblical world must lead to the creation of an inclusive, non-oppressive, non-exploitative, non hierarchical community, based on justice, equality, freedom and well-being of all.

2. Kingdom of God

God's kingdom is a vision of Jesus Christ and the Church must fulfill it by its mission. The Beatitudes LK 6:20 "Blessed are you who are poor for yours is the kingdom of God". Jesus promised kingdom to the poor and oppressed, so that Casteless and classless society is made possible. The poor (Dalit/marginalized) people should have the fruits of kingdom, Equality, peace and Justice. But in today's context the dominant Caste groups are enjoying the fruits of kingdom. The poor and oppressed are found in agony and suffering.

The community must first of all be a community that struggles against any form of injustice and oppression. This fact is well expressed by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's strategy of "Educate, Agitate, Organize", and this was put into practice by various political groups.

In addition to socio, economic, political activities, the Church has also worships and sacraments. Here the Church must strive to be all inclusive community and credible sign of kingdom of God. The Catholic are called to reflect on whether they meaningfully participate in **Eucharist** which is the symbol of **unity, love and brotherhood**, Without making any effort to root out Caste in and outside of the Church.

3. Christian fellowship.

It can be said that Jesus was crucified because of how he ate with and enjoyed the company of the poor and the marginalized and the sinners: He was accused of eating and drinking with the publicans and the sinners (Lk 5:30, Mk 2:16) and his invitation is precisely to share one's provisions with others here on earth as the generous little boy who was instrumental in feeding the five-thousand hungry followers of Jesus in the desert (Jn 6:9) and then, to 'eat and drink at my table in my kingdom' (Lk 22:29). Table-fellowship not only recognizes the existence of the other but also accepts the other as the equal.

Jesus invites his followers in steps to i. Social table; ii. Family/Companion table; iii. Eucharistic table; and iv. Intellectual/Empowering table. The ultimate goal is that human beings have been created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:27; Gen 5:1) but due to structural sin of exploitation and discrimination and marginalization the humankind became fragmented as the oppressor and the oppressed. Then God came to redeem and eventually has invited all to come together where there will be no distinction based on caste nor creed nor nationality nor gender- The broken humankind is to be made whole in and through the table-fellowship. Table-fellowship here on earth is essential and a pre-condition for the Table-fellowship in heaven.

4. Mission and Ministry of the Church:

Change in attitude towards the marginalized, culminating in conviction that all are created in God's image and all would be saved together without any discrimination. This would lead us to concrete actions with time limit to empower the marginalized. When Jesus asked Peter, 'Do you love me?' (Jn 20:15-17), he entrusted the mission of feeding the sheep to Peter. The same mission, bequeathed to the Church, is to create a conducive atmosphere for the sheep to grow without any partiality and discrimination in order to find fullness of life first here on earth before finding unity with God. Thus it is the primary mission of the Church to guarantee integral growth of the people - Integral growth implies affirmative action for the marginalized and the neglected and the discriminated as Jesus said that physician is needed for the affected (Mt 9:12).

The process begins with reflection on 'what is happening in the Church' and 'what is happening to the Church'. **Pope Benedict XVI emphasizes integral development in his encyclical 'Caritas in veritate'**. Within the Church, the marginalized are getting disillusioned and getting ready for an exodus (which had already started to trickle out) and the secular powers are creeping into the Church and soon there is danger of Church going secular. The Church should not underestimate the power of the poor and the marginalized. A silent revolution is brewing up. In the beginning the Church was poor but as the power-game came in the discrimination also came in and the poor and the marginalized who were the centre of the Church were driven to the edge of the society already in the first century – That is why Paul and James have to warn against discrimination of the poor and the marginalized in breaking of

bread which is the symbol of unity in Jesus. Therefore today's Church must imitate the first Christians ideal community and exercise the ministry of sharing everything with poor, marginalized and Dalits.

V. Catholic Data reveal Discrimination in the Church – 2013 Statistics.

Population	Total Number	Dalits	Percentage
Total Indian Population	1200 Millions		
Total Christians	25 Millions		
Total Dalit Christians		20 Millions	(65%)
Total Catholics	18 Millions		
Total Dalit Catholics		12 Millions	(65%)
Catholic Dioceses	166		
Catholic Bishops	180		
Dalit Bishops		07	(4%)
Catholic Diocesan Priests	15,420		
Dalit Catholic Priests		754	(5%)
Religious Priests	7,031		
Dalit Religious Priests		310	(4%)
Religious sisters	65,000		
Dalit Religious sisters		3,200	(5%)
Cardinals	06		
Dalit Cardinals		Nil	

Tamil Nadu Catholic Statistic

Bishops	19		
Dalit Bishops		02	(2%)
Diocesan Priests	2,005		
Diocesan Dalit Priests		0,275	(7%)
Religious Priests	0654		
Religious sisters	65,000		
Dalit Religious sisters		3200	(5%)
Total Catholics	36,33,000		
Dalit Catholics		25,43,000	(70%)

Present Dalit Bishops in India – 2013

Sl.No	Name	Diocese	State
1	Most. Rev. Antonysamy Neethinathan.	Chinglepet	Tamil Nadu
2	Most.Rev.Soundararaju Periyamayagam	Vellore	Tamil Nadu
3	Most. Rev. Prasad Gallela	Cuddapah	Andrapradesh
4	Most. Rev. Antony Poola	Kurnool	Andrapradesh
5	Most. Rev. D. Prakasam	Nellore	Andrapradesh
6	Most. Rev. Thomas Ignatius Macwan	Ahmadabad	Utrapradesh
7	Most. Rev. Sarath Chandra Nayak	Berhampur	Orissa

75% Catholics are living in South-India the largest Dalit Catholic community reside in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, states in South-India. In North India and except Tribal and Adivasi Communities all the Catholics belong to Dalit Community. Tribals/Adivasi People are not affected by Caste system and untouchability. They continue to get all the reservation facilities even after conversion to Christianity.

Tribal Catholics may be **2 Millions in the total Catholic population**. They are given around 20 Bishops and one Cardinal (Cardinal Telespher P. Toppo of Ranchi). Very thin catholic population of 420,000 of Syro-malankara Church have the leadership of 8 Bishops and one Cardinal (Cardinal Moran Baselios Cleemis of Trivandrum). The majority 65% Dalit Catholic Community's are given only 7 Bishops only. These faithful and sacrificing communities are denied the right of having Archbishop and Cardinal. At present their representation in Hierarchy, priests, Religious is less than 5% only. The same injustice in sharing leadership is found in other structures of the Church, such as Religious Congregations generally Provincials, Rectors, Superiors, Principals, Secretaries of National and Regional Commissions etc. Therefore, there is urgent need to take immediate action to eradicate discrimination and oppressions on the basis of Caste and gender Justice, for the transformation of the oppressed people. Dalits are outcastes, means Outside of Caste system, not practicing any discrimination. In short they have no Caste system and not caught within the Caste system. They do not approve and accept Caste system privileges are given to annihilate Caste system. Participation in the Church administration is demanded on the basis size of Dalit population in order to make them move from bottom to the mainstream.

This great task can be fulfilled only by appointing Heads of Vatican Congregations, Apostolic Nuncio in India, Archbishops and Bishops who understand Dalit realities and sufferings. The Church leaders must identify themselves with marginalized and weaker sections to transform the life of the struggling community. Some action plan are proposed below for the integral development of Dalit and Marginalized Communities in India. These plans of action could be implemented with conviction and compassion. May Holy Father appoint special committees to study this age-old problem of Dalit Catholics and appropriate actions could be taken by His Holiness immediate intervention for peaceful solution for extension of Catholic Church in India and all over Asia.

VI. PROPOSALS FOR EMPOWERMENT OF DALIT CATHOLICS

- 1. As the Government of India extends reservation to Dalits according to the percentage of Scheduled Caste population in the country, Dalit Catholics could be given reservation in all structures of the Church in proportion to the population in the diocese and region.*
- 2. Appropriate actions should be taken to eradicate untouchability at all the levels of the Church, in order to build up equality and brotherhood.*
- 3. The Educational powers and resources of the Church should be made available to poor Dalit Catholics to empower themselves through Education.*
- 4. A Catholic University in India is very necessary for socio, educational and economic mobility of our Catholic Community.*
- 5. Social Service Societies and other Organs of the Church must have special programmes with sufficient financial support for the integral development of target people.*
- 6. Establishment of the institutions for the promotion of the Dalit studies, Theology, Culture, Literature and Subaltern Theology must be part of syllabus in all the Priestly and religious formation houses.*
- 7. Well defined policies and regulations in all the levels of the Church to provide leadership in the administration of the Church.*
- 8. The whole Christian Community should make concerted efforts for the extension of the Scheduled Caste Rights to all Scheduled Caste converts to Christianity.*
- 9. All the Diocesan, regional and national commissions must adopt the policy of empowerment to Dalit Christians.*
- 10. A monitoring Committee in each dioceses and congregation for the facilitation of effective implementation of all the programmes, declared by the Church for the empowerment of Dalits.*

Conclusion

In this year of faith, we place before His Holiness our needful prayers with great hope of achieving liberation and integral Development. May His Holiness make immediate intervention and inspire the heads of the Church to empower Dalit Catholic Community as a sign of accomplishing Mission of Christ.

Your Beloved Oppressed Children in Jesus Christ.

Arch Bishop, Bishops, Priest, Religious and Laity

1. **Most. Rev. A. M. Chinnappa SDB**
Emeritus Arch Bishop
Madras – Mylapor.
2. **Most. Rev. Antonysamy Neethinathan**
Bishop of Chinglepet,
Chairman, National Regional Bishops Council for SC/ST.
3. **Most. Rev. Soundararaju Periyamayagam SDB**
Bishop of Vellore
Chairman Tamil Nadu Bishops Council
Commission for Youth.
4. **Rev. Dr. Fr. S. Lourduwamy**
Former Secretary
National CBCI committee for SC/ST

Annexe 4



PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY

IMPORTANT

This is the **international** version of the text
of the Week of Prayer 2013

Kindly contact your local Bishops' Conference or Synod of your Church
to obtain an adaptation of this text for your local context

Resources for
THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY
and throughout the year 2013

What does God require of us?(cf. Micah 6:6-8)

Jointly prepared and published by
The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and
The Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches

TO THOSE ORGANIZING
THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

The search for unity: throughout the year

The traditional period in the northern hemisphere for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is 18-25 January. Those dates were proposed in 1908 by Paul Wattson to cover the days between the feasts of St Peter and St Paul, and therefore have a symbolic significance. In the southern hemisphere where January is a vacation time churches often find other days to celebrate the week of prayer, for example around Pentecost (suggested by the Faith and Order movement in 1926), which is also a symbolic date for the unity of the church.

Mindful of the need for flexibility, we invite you to use this material throughout the whole year to express the degree of communion which the churches have already reached, and to pray together for that full unity which is Christ's will.

Adapting the text

This material is offered with the understanding that, whenever possible, it will be adapted for use in local situations. Account should be taken of local liturgical and devotional practice, and of the whole social and cultural context. Such adaptation should ideally take place ecumenically. In some places ecumenical structures are already set up for adapting the material; in other places, we hope that the need to adapt it will be a stimulus to creating such structures.

Using the Week of Prayer material

- * For churches and Christian communities which observe the week of prayer together through a single common service, an order for an ecumenical worship service is provided.
- * Churches and Christian communities may also incorporate material from the week of prayer into their own services. Prayers from the ecumenical worship service, the 'eight days', and the selection of additional prayers can be used as appropriate in their own setting.
- * Communities which observe the week of prayer in their worship for each day during the week may draw material for these services from the 'eight days'.
- * Those wishing to do bible studies on the week of prayer theme can use as a basis the biblical texts and reflections given in the eight days. Each day the discussions can lead to a closing period of intercessory prayer.

* Those who wish to pray privately may find the material helpful for focusing their prayer intentions. They can be mindful that they are in communion with others praying all around the world for the greater visible unity of Christ's church.

BIBLICAL TEXT FOR 2013 [\[1\]](#)

(Micah 6: 6-8)

‘With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with tens of thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?’ He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME FOR THE YEAR 2013

What does God require of us? (*cf.* Micah 6:6-8)

To mark its centenary, the Student Christian Movement of India (SCMI) was invited to prepare the resources for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (WPCU) 2013 and they involved the All India Catholic University Federation and the National Council of Churches in India. In the preparatory process while reflecting on the significance of the WPCU, it was decided that in a context of great injustice to Dalits in India and in the Church, the search for visible unity cannot be disassociated from the dismantling of casteism and the lifting up of contributions to unity by the poorest of the poor.

The Dalits in the Indian context are the communities which are considered ‘out-castes’. They are the people worst affected by the caste-system, which is a rigid form of social stratification based on notions of ritual purity and pollution. Under the caste-system, the castes are considered to be ‘higher’ or ‘lower’. The Dalit communities are considered to be the most polluted and polluting and thus placed outside the caste-system and were previously even called ‘untouchable’. Because of casteism the Dalits are socially marginalized, politically under-represented, economically exploited and culturally subjugated. Almost 80% of Indian Christians have a Dalit background.

Despite outstanding progress in the twentieth century, the churches in India remain divided along the doctrinal divisions inherited from Europe and elsewhere. Christian disunity in India within churches and between them is further accentuated by the caste system. Casteism, like apartheid,

racism and nationalism poses severe challenges for the unity of Christians in India and therefore, for the moral and ecclesial witness of the Church as the one body of Christ. As a church-dividing issue, casteism is consequently an acute doctrinal issue. It is in this context that this year's WPCU invites us to explore the well known biblical text of Micah 6:6-8, focusing upon the question 'what does God require of us' as the main theme. The Dalit experience serves as the crucible from within which theological reflections on the biblical theme emerge.

Micah was one of the twelve minor prophets of the Old Testament who prophesied from approximately 737-690 BC in Judah. He came from Moresheth, southwest of Jerusalem, and prophesied during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah of Judah (Micah 1:1). He lived in the same political, economic, moral, and religious conditions as his contemporary Isaiah and with him witnessed the destruction of Samaria, and the invasion of the Southern Kingdom by the King of Assyria in the year 701 BC. His grief as he wept over the plight of his people informs the tone of his book, and he turns his anger upon the leaders (2:1-5) and priests who had betrayed his people.

The Book of Micah belongs to the literary tradition of Prophecy. At the heart of its message is the oracle of judgment. The book unfolds in three sections demonstrating a journey from judgment in general (ch.1-3), to the proclamation of salvation (ch. 4-5), to the word of judgment and the celebration of salvation (ch.6-7). In the first part, Micah harshly criticizes those in authority, both political and religious, for abusing their power and stealing from the poor: They "tear the skin off my people" (3:2), and "give judgment for a bribe" (3:11). In the second part of the book Micah exhorts the people to walk in pilgrimage "up to the mountain of the Lord... that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his path" (4:2). God's judgment is revealed in the third part to be accompanied by a call to await in hope for salvation, with faith in God who "pardons iniquities and passes over transgression" (7:18). This hope focuses upon the Messiah, who will be "peace" (5:4), and who will come forth from Bethlehem (5:1) bringing salvation "to the ends of the earth" (5:4). Micah ultimately calls upon all nations of the world to walk in this pilgrimage, to share in the justice and peace which is their salvation.

Micah's strong call to justice and peace is concentrated in chapters 6:1 – 7:7, part of which forms the theme of this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (WPCU). He sets justice and peace within the history of the relationship between God and humanity but insists that this history necessitates and demands a strong ethical reference. Like other prophets who lived in the period of the Israel monarchy, Micah reminds the people that God has saved them from slavery in Egypt and called them through the covenant to live in a society built on dignity, equality and justice.

Thus, true faith in God is inseparable from personal holiness and the search for social justice. More than just worship, sacrifices and burnt offerings (6:7), God's salvation from slavery and daily humiliation rather demands that we should "do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God" (cf. 6:8).

In many ways, the situation facing the people of God in the time of Micah can be compared to the situation of the Dalit community in India. Dalits also face oppression and injustice from those who wish to deny them their rights and dignity. Micah compared the greed of those who exploited the poor to those who "eat the flesh of my people, flay the skin off them, break their bones in pieces" (3:3). Micah's rejection of rituals and sacrifices which were impoverished by a lack of concern for justice, speaks of God's expectation that justice ought to be at the core of our religion and rituals. His message is prophetic in a context where discrimination against the Dalits is legitimized on the basis of religion and notions of ritual purity and pollution. Faith gains or loses its meaning in relation to justice. In the contemporary Dalit situation Micah's insistence on the moral element of our faith requires us to ask ourselves what God truly requires of us; mere sacrifices, or to walk with God in justice and peace.

The path of Christian discipleship involves walking the path of justice, mercy and humility. The metaphor of 'walking' has been chosen to link together the 8 days of prayer because, as an active, intentional and ongoing act, the metaphor of walking communicates the dynamism which characterizes Christian discipleship. Further, the theme of the tenth assembly of the WCC to be held in Busan, Korea, in 2013 - 'God of life lead us to Justice and Peace' resonates with the image of the Trinitarian God who accompanies humanity and walks into human history while inviting all people to walk in partnership.

The 8 subthemes for the week, related to different modes of walking, enable us to focus on various dimensions of an authentic Christian discipleship which walks the path of righteousness that leads to life (Prov 12:28a).

Day 1: *walking in conversation*. We reflect on the importance of the practices of dialogue and conversation, as a means of overcoming barriers. Both in ecumenism, and in the struggles for liberation of people across the globe, the skills of speaking and listening are recognised as essential. In such authentic conversation we can come to recognise Christ more clearly.

Day 2: *walking with the broken body of Christ*. Recognising the solidarity between Christ crucified, and the "broken peoples" of the world,

such as the Dalits, we seek as Christians together to learn to be more deeply a part of this solidarity ourselves. In particular, the relation of eucharist and justice is opened up, and Christians invited to discover practical ways of eucharistic living in the world.

Day 3: *walking towards freedom*. Today we are invited to celebrate the efforts of communities across our world that are oppressed, like the Dalits in India, as they protest against all that enslaves human beings. As Christians committed to greater unity, we learn that the removal of all that separates people from one another is an essential part of fullness of life, freedom in the Spirit.

Day 4: *walking as children of the earth*. Awareness of our place in God's creation draws us together, as we realize our interdependence upon one another and the earth. Contemplating the urgent calls to environmental care, and to proper sharing and justice with regard to the fruits of the earth, Christians are called into lives of active witness, in the spirit of the year of Jubilee.

Day 5: *walking as the friends of Jesus*. Today we reflect on the biblical images of human friendship and love as models for God's love for every human being. Understanding ourselves as beloved friends of God has consequences for relationships within the community of Jesus. Within the Church, all barriers of exclusion are inconsistent within a community in which all are equally the beloved friends of Jesus.

Day 6: *walking beyond barriers*. Walking with God means walking beyond barriers that divide and damage the children of God. The biblical readings on this day look at various ways in which human barriers are overcome, culminating in St Paul's teaching that "As many of you were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."

Day 7: *walking in solidarity*. To walk humbly with God means walking in solidarity with all who struggle for justice and peace. Walking in solidarity has implications not just for individual believers, but for the very nature and mission of the whole Christian community. The Church is called and empowered to share the suffering of all by advocacy and care for the poor, the needy and the marginalised. Such is implicit in our prayer for Christian unity this week.

Day 8: *walking in celebration*. The biblical texts on this day speak about celebration, not in the sense of celebrating a successful completion, but celebration as a sign of hope in God and in God's justice. Similarly, the celebration of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is our sign of hope that our unity will be achieved according to God's time and God's means.

What God requires of us today is to walk the path of justice, mercy and humility. This path of discipleship involves walking the narrow path of God's reign and not the highway of today's empires. Walking this path of righteousness involves the hardships of struggle, the isolation which accompanies protest and the risk associated with resisting "the powers and principalities" (Ep 6:12). This is especially so when those who speak out for justice are treated as trouble makers and disrupters of peace. In this context we need to understand that peace and unity are complete only if founded on justice.

Given the focus of the WPCU on the Dalit communities in India, this walk of discipleship is metaphorically speaking 'a walk which is accompanied by the beat of the Dalit drum'. Several Dalit communities have been associated with professional ritual drumming in Indian villages. Dalit drumming not only invokes the presence of the divine but also enables the safe passage of the community during times of transition by warding off what is considered to be evil. Today Dalit drumming has been recovered as a celebration of Dalit culture and identity. Therefore, when we speak of 'a walk of discipleship accompanied by the Dalit drum' we are referring to a form of discipleship which is constantly reminded of God's abiding presence with the most marginalized. It also recalls a form of discipleship which recognizes the resilient strength of the Dalits in confronting evil and contributing to the well-being of the wider community. We are reminded of a form of discipleship which affirms Dalit culture and identity as being unexpected spaces of the experience of Christ's presence (cf. Mt 25:40). Such discipleship will lead to true solidarity as well as forms of Christian unity which are free from unjust discrimination and exclusion.

One of the professions associated with certain Dalit communities in India is 'sewing sandals'. As one of the means of survival for Dalit communities it symbolizes their experience of forging together a meaningful existence of resilience and hope in degrading and dehumanizing conditions. It is the hope of the daily reflections that the gifts of the Dalit experience of survival amidst struggle may become for us the sandals which we put on as we seek to walk the path of righteousness in our own contexts by doing what God requires of us. 'Any semblance of a caste-based prejudice in relations between Christians,' says the late Pope John Paul II^[2], 'is a countersign to authentic human solidarity, a threat to genuine spirituality and a serious hindrance to the Church's mission of evangelization'. May our God of justice, unity and peace enable us to be authentic signs of human solidarity by strengthening us to do what God requires of us.

THE PREPARATION OF THE MATERIAL FOR THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 2013

The original draft of this year's Week of Prayer material was prepared by the Student Christian Movement of India (SCMI), in consultation with the All India Catholic University Federation (AICUF) and the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI). We wish to thank all of those who contributed, particularly:

H.E. Metropolitan Dr Geevarghese Mar Coorilos, Chairperson (SCMI)
(Malankara Jacobites Syrian Orthodox Church)

Ms. Bernadine, All India Catholic University Federation (AICUF)
(Catholic Church)

Dr. Aruna Gnanadason, Senior Friend, SCMI (Church of South India)

Dr. Peniel Rufus Rajkumar, United Theological College (Church of South India)

Fr. Vineeth Koshy, National Council of Churches in India (NCCI)
(Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church)

Ms. Anita Hepsibah, SCMI (Church of South India)

Ms. Chrisida Nithyakalyani, SCMI (Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church)

Rev. Raj Bharath Patta, SCMI (Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church).

The texts prepared by this group were finalized by members of the International Committee nominated by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. The International Committee met with members of the Student Christian Movement of India, and their associates, in September 2011 at Bangalore, India, and wishes to record its thanks to the SCMI for generously hosting the meeting.

ECUMENICAL WORSHIP SERVICE

Introduction to the Worship Service

What does God require of us? (*cf. Micah 6: 6-8*)

This year's worship reflects the youthful character of the Student Christian Movement of India (SCMI). It takes into account the Dalit reality and offers an opportunity to share in their spirituality. Particular elements of the service come from the Indian Dalit context, which include

the use of drums, and the bhajan, which is a local way of singing the lyrics affirming their faith in God. A third element, which is particular, is the sharing of the faith testimony that illustrates the Dalit spirituality of striving for justice, loving kindness and walking in dignity with God (cf. Micah 6:6-8). The service concludes with the sign of sharing, which is common in Dalit communities—in this case with the sharing of sprouting seeds or a small sapling symbolising our call to hope and transformation.

Throughout the Week of Prayer, Christians all over the world explore in ecumenical fellowship what it means to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with God. This theme is developed over the eight days by the metaphor of walking. For Dalit communities, the walk towards liberation is inseparable from the walk towards unity. And so our walk with Dalits this week, and with all who yearn for justice, is an integral part of prayer for Christian unity.

Christians in India should reject caste divisions, just as Christians worldwide should not accept the divisions among them: “Is Christ divided?” (1Cor 1:13). For this reason we gather in worship to pray for that unity which Christ wills for his Church, and we are called to break down such walls of divisions among and between us.

Structure of the Service

The order of worship contains six elements: opening, praise and thanksgiving, confession of sin and assurance, Liturgy of the Word and testimony of faith, intercessory prayers, benediction and dismissal.

I. The celebration begins with a prelude of the beating of drums, which symbolises both the celebration of life and of resistance to oppression for the Dalit communities in India. It marks the resilience of all communities struggling for justice and liberation all over the world. An example of Dalit drums can be found on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7HDt7OmzUdw&feature=related>. Those communities which do not have drums may find an appropriate action or instrument that expresses the same intention. The resource for the invocation has been taken from the writings of the famous Indian Noble laureate Rabindranath Tagore. The opening concludes with a Bhajan, a prayer chant led by a leader and repeated prayerfully by the assembly (Telugu language). Examples of Bhajan chants may be found on the internet.

II. Praise and Thanksgiving

III. Confession of sin, Assurance of pardon: As a sign of assurance, the assembly is invited to walk to share a sign of peace during which instrumental music can be played.

IV. The Liturgy of the Word begins with the reading of the text for the Week of Prayer Micah 6:6-8. This is followed by a testimony of faith from a real life situation of a woman called Sarah from the Dalit community. This incident took place in 2008 in Khandamal, in Orissa State in central India where for a month, violence erupted when Christians (largely Dalits) were attacked by Hindu extremists. Christian places of worship and homes were destroyed. Orissa is one of the poorest parts of India, traditionally associated with the most discriminated sections of society. The toll of the violence was 59 deaths, 115 Christian churches were destroyed, homes damaged, and 50 thousand homeless Christians sought refuge in the forests and later in refugee camps set up by the Indian government. Some 80-90% of Christians in India are Dalit converts. Like Sarah, in the story, the majority of Dalits were not given inducements to become Christian, as is sometimes claimed; large numbers of Dalits converted when they came to the missions to seek refuge from the oppressive caste system. They asked for the freedom they believed they could enjoy under the healing power of God who liberates. A similar testimony of faith from your context can be offered at this time. The congregation is then called on to meditate in silence on these testimonies of faith as we continue to listen to God's Word.

V. Prayers of Intercession

VI. Blessing and Dismissal: A typical custom within Dalit communities is the sharing of food, and so we suggest that there be a common meal at the end of the worship service.

Order of the Service

What does God require of us? (*cf. Micah 6: 6-8*)

L : Leader

R : Reader

A : Assembly

I. Opening

1. Prelude (*With the beating of Dalit Drums or some appropriate music.*)(*The Leader offers words of welcome to the assembly.*)

2. Call to Worship**L** : Jesus said, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them". Let us in silence acknowledge the presence of the triune God in our midst.

Silence

II. Praise and thanksgiving

(The leader invites people gathered to hold hands to form a human chain of unity and solidarity as they say these prayers.)

L: We praise you dear God for creating us in all our diversity. For the gift of our many cultures, languages, diverse expressions of belief, customs, traditions, and ethnicities we thank you! We thank you for the many church traditions which have kept our communities strong and active even in places where they are a minority. Teach us to celebrate our different identities and traditions, so as to forge bonds of friendship and fellowship leading us to greater unity.

A: *How very good and pleasant it is when sisters and brothers live together in unity!*

L: We praise you Jesus Christ for reconciling us with God and with one another through your death and resurrection and teaching us to respect the dignity and value of all human beings. We thank you for your in-breaking into our lives everyday calling on us to stand in solidarity with those whose dignity is broken by political, social and economic structures. Teach us to celebrate the message of hope that in you we can overcome all that is evil in our world.

A: *How very good and pleasant it is when sisters and brothers live together in unity!*

L: We praise you Holy Spirit for the gift of mutual interdependence and solidarity that has been our heritage as peoples and churches. Teach us to treasure the bonds of unity we enjoy as we beseech your continuing presence with us. Inspire us on our journey towards full visible unity among us, and with all those peoples and movements that engage in the struggles for life.

A: *How very good and pleasant it is when sisters and brothers live together in unity!*

III. Confession of Sin, Assurance of pardon

L: We know that in Christ we are already one. In spite of this, our human weakness has not always led us to witness to this reality. Let us now confess our sins of disunity and seek the Lord's healing.

Silence

A: In humility we come to your feet, dear God as we remember our sinfulness and the disunity for which we have been responsible. We confess that we preserve the inherited human barriers of caste, class,

ethnicity, power and all things that keep Christians apart. We ask for your forgiveness that we have often used our history and our past as churches to discriminate against one another and hurt the unity to which Christ has called us. Forgive us our disunity and help us to continue to strive for unity, in the precious name of Jesus your Son. *Amen.*

Supplication

A: Come now Jesus into our midst and heal us and our disunity. Lead us into the paths of righteousness so that all can find life. Come now Jesus into our midst and teach us how to listen to the cries of those who are pushed into the margins. Come now Jesus into our midst and inspire us to work together with all those who strive for liberation so as to build unity within your broken body. *Amen.*

Assurance of pardon

L: If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

(The leader invites the assembly to share this assurance of pardon by walking towards each other and sharing the peace. This may be accompanied by instrumental music.)

IV. Liturgy of the Word

First Reading: Micah 6: 6-8

A testimony of faith

When they came for Sarah Dugal, she wasn't there. She had fled, five children and mother-in-law in tow, to the safety of the jungles a kilometre away. So, they set ablaze all that she had left behind, a framed picture of Jesus, a Bible in Oriya, utensils in the kitchen, some clothes, mats and linen. By the time Sarah tiptoed back, when she saw it was safe, her home was gone. What was left was burning embers, ashes and smoke. The neighbours came to commiserate with her. Sarah took a good look, stood erect, and pulled her sari firmly over her head. She began to pray. "Lord, forgive us our sins. Jesus, you are the only one. Save us from our misfortune. Free us, Lord." The words were tumbling out. Sarah's children slowly joined her. She was weeping as she pleaded with God for deliverance. Her neighbours and others around her joined her. It is a simple bond of human compassion and a strong reminder that nothing can sever a woman from her God. "I will die. But I will not stop being a Christian," Sarah said through her tears." A staunch and brave Dalit Christian woman!

(And another testimony of faith)

L: Let us in silence meditate on these testimonies of faith and courage. As we commend the faith of our sister Sarah and others, let us be challenged in our own journeys of faith.

(Silence)

Psalm 86: 11-16 Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart to revere your name.

In the path of righteousness there is life.

I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name for ever. For great is your steadfast love towards me; you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.

In the path of righteousness there is life.

O God, the insolent rise up against me; a band of ruffians seeks my life, and they do not set you before them.

In the path of righteousness there is life.

But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. Turn to me and be gracious to me; give your strength to your servant; save the child of your serving-maid.

In the path of righteousness there is life.

Second Reading: Galatians 3: 26-28

A Gospel Acclamation may be sung. Gospel: Luke 24: 13-35 An appropriate hymn can be sung.

Homily Prayers of Intercession**L:** Walking in conversation, let us recognise all the efforts of the ecumenical movement towards the realisation of the unity willed by Christ for the Church.

A: *Send your Spirit to strengthen our resolve and deepen our conversations to realise Jesus' prayer in us.*

L: Walking with the broken body of Christ, we are painfully aware that we are still unable to join in the breaking of bread together. Hasten the day when we can realise the fullness of fellowship at the Lord's table.

A: *Inflame in our hearts the desire to overcome all that divides us so that we can see one Christ in our brokenness.*

L: Walking towards freedom, let us remember along with Dalit communities other people facing similar kinds of discriminations and may the unity of the Churches be a sign of hope in situations of injustice.

A: *Strengthen our churches' commitment to create spaces in our society and communities, to enable them to live in dignity and freedom. Allow us to be transformed by their gifts and presence.*

L: Walking as children of earth, we realise that we are pilgrims in the wonderful gift of creation given to us. Let us respect the earth as your creation and make us sensitive to the care of it.

A: *Let your Spirit renew creation and make us attentive to the suffering of the landless people who are often the bearers of a tradition of prudent care of the earth and its resources.*

L: Walking as friends of Jesus, let us accompany marginalised communities all over the world that Jesus chooses to identify with in overcoming centuries of shame to find freedom and dignity. Let us befriend those friends of Christ, like the Dalit Christians, who are often persecuted for choosing Christ and rejecting caste.

A: *Enlarge and deepen our fellowship and friendship with you and with each other so that we will remain faithful and truthful to your calling.*

L: Walking beyond barriers, let us build communities of unity and equality.

A: *Grant us courage so that we can overcome cultures and structures that hinder us from recognising the presence of God in each other.*

L: Walking in solidarity with women like Sarah and other victims of discrimination and injustice, let us be shaken out of our apathy.

A: *Encircle us with your love, as we affirm the image of God in each person we encounter. Enable us to do justice by breaking through social structures of inequality.*

L: Walking in celebration, we come to see that the unity we share within our communities is a profound witness to the gospel of faith and hope. As we celebrate that unity, let us also rejoice in our rich diversities that reflect the life of the Trinity.

A: *May we celebrate the wonderful diversity in human life, born from the struggles for dignity and survival amid oppression, and see in it a sign of your abiding faithfulness to your people.*

In Christ's name we raise all these prayers, O God. *Amen.*

The Lord's Prayer (*in our own languages*)

Blessing and Dismissal

L: Be present to us, Triune God who nurtures us, to remind us of the purpose you have for each one of us and our churches.

A: *Amen.*

L: Walk before us, Triune God who strengthens us, and lead us on the path to unity.

A: *Amen.*

L: Call us into abundant life, Triune God who sustains us, as we stand together and call upon God.

A: *Amen.*

L: Go out into the world to heal and to be healed.

A: *Thanks be to God.*

A closing hymn

As a sign of unity in Christ it is suggested that a meal is shared.

**BIBLICAL REFLECTIONS AND PRAYERS
FOR THE 'EIGHT DAYS'**

Day 1

Walking in conversation

Readings

- Genesis 11:1-9 The story of Babel and legacy of our diversity
Psalm 34:11-18 "Come...listen". God's invitation to conversation
Acts 2:1-12 The outpouring of the Spirit, the gift of understanding
Luke 24:13-25 Conversation with the Risen Jesus on the road

Commentary

To walk humbly with God means to walk as people speaking with one another and with the Lord, always attentive to what we hear. And so we begin our celebration of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity by reflecting on scripture passages which speak of the essential practice of

conversation. Conversation has been central to the ecumenical movement, as it opens up spaces for learning from one another, sharing what we have in common, and for differences to be heard and attended to. In this way mutual understanding is developed. These gifts from the search for unity are part of our basic call to respond to what God requires of us: through true conversation justice is done, and kindness learnt. Experiences of practical liberation from all over the world make clear that the isolation of people who are made to live with poverty is forcefully overcome by practices of dialogue.

Today's Genesis reading, and the story of Pentecost, both reflect something of this human action, and its place in God's liberating plan for people. The story of the tower of Babel first describes how, where there is no language barrier great things are possible. However, the story tells how this potential is grasped as a basis for self-promotion: "let us make a name for ourselves", is the motivation for the building of the great city. In the end this project leads to a confusion of speech; from now on we must learn our proper humanity through patient attentiveness to the other who is strange to us. It is with the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost that understanding across differences is made possible in a new way, through the power of Jesus' resurrection. Now we are invited to share the gift of speech and listening orientated toward the Lord, and towards freedom. We are called to walk in the Spirit.

The experience of the disciples on the road to Emmaus is a conversation taking place in a context of travel together, but also of loss and disappointed hope. As churches living with levels of disunity, and as societies divided by prejudices and fear of the other we can recognise ourselves here. Yet it is precisely here that Jesus chooses to join the conversation - not presuming the superior role of teacher, but walking alongside his disciples. It is his desire to be a part of our conversations, and our response of wanting him to stay and speak more with us, that enables a living encounter with the Risen Lord.

All Christians know something of this meeting with Jesus, and the power of his word "burning within us"; this resurrection experience calls us into a deeper unity in Christ. Constant conversation with each other and with Jesus - even in our own disorientation - keeps us walking together towards unity.

Prayer

Jesus Christ, we proclaim with joy our common identity in you, and we thank you for inviting us into a dialogue of love with you. Open our hearts to share more perfectly in your prayer to the Father that we may be one, so that as we journey together we may draw closer to each

other. Give us the courage to bear witness to the truth together, and may our conversations embrace those who perpetuate disunity. Send your Spirit to empower us to challenge situations where dignity and compassion are lacking in our societies, nations, and the world.

God of life, lead us to justice and peace. Amen

Questions

- Where do we practice true conversation, across the various differences that separate us?
- Is our conversation orientated towards some grand project of our own, or towards new life which brings hope of resurrection?
- What people do we converse with, and who is not included in our conversations? Why?

Day 2

Walking with the broken body of Christ

Readings

Ezekiel 37:1-14 "Shall these dry bones live?"

Psalm 22:1-8 God's servant, mocked and insulted, cries out to God

Hebrews 13:12-16 The call to go to Jesus "outside the camp"

Luke 22: 14-23 Jesus breaks the bread, giving the gift of himself before his suffering

Commentary

To walk humbly with God means hearing the call us to walk out of the places of our own comfort, and accompany the other, especially the suffering other.

"Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off." These words from Ezekiel give voice to the experience of many people across the globe today. In India, it is the "broken people" of the Dalit communities whose lives speak vividly of this suffering - a suffering in which Christ, the crucified one, shares. With injured people of every time and place, Jesus cries out to the Father: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

"Christians are called into this way of the cross. The Epistle to the Hebrews makes clear not only the saving reality of Jesus' suffering, in the place of the margins, but also the need for his disciples to go "outside the camp" to join him there. When we meet those who have been excluded and we recognise the crucified one in their sufferings, the direction we should be going is clear: to be with Christ, means to be in solidarity with those on the margins whose wounds he shares.

The body of Christ, broken on the cross, is “broken for you”. The story of Christ’s suffering and death is prefaced by the story of the last supper: it is then celebrated as victory over death in every Eucharist. In this Christian celebration, Christ’s broken body is his risen and glorious body; his body is broken so that we can share his life, and, in him, be one body.

As Christians on the way to unity we can often see the Eucharist as a place where the scandal of our disunity is painfully real, knowing that, as yet, we cannot fully share this sacrament together as we should. This situation calls us to renewed efforts towards deeper communion with one another.

Today’s readings might open up another line of reflection. Walking with Christ’s broken body opens up a way to be Eucharistic together: to share our bread with the hungry, to break down the barriers of poverty and inequality - these, too, are “Eucharistic acts”, in which all Christians are called to work together. Pope Benedict XVI frames his reflections on Eucharist for the church in just this way: that it is a sacrament not only to be believed in and celebrated, but also to be lived (*Sacramentum caritatis*). In keeping with the Orthodox understanding of “the liturgy after the liturgy”, here it is recognised that there is “nothing authentically human” that does not find its pattern and life in the Eucharist. (SC 71)

Prayer

God of compassion, your Son died on the Cross so that by his broken body our divisions might be destroyed. Yet we have crucified him again and again with our disunity, and with systems and practices which obstruct your loving care and undermine your justice towards those who have been excluded from the gifts of your creation. Send us your Spirit to breathe life and healing into our brokenness that we may witness together to the justice and love of Christ. Walk with us towards that day when we can share in the one bread and the one cup at the common table.

God of life, lead us to justice and peace. Amen.

Questions

- In light of that prophetic tradition in which God desires justice, rather than ritual without righteousness, we need to ask: how is the eucharist, the mystery of Christ’s brokenness and new life, celebrated in all the places where we walk?
- What might we do, as Christians together, better to witness to our unity in Christ in places of brokenness and marginality?

Day 3

Walking towards freedom

Readings

Exodus 1: 15-22	The Hebrew midwives obey God's law over the command of Pharaoh
Psalms 17: 1-6	The confident prayer of one open to God's gaze
2 Cor. 3: 17-18	The glorious freedom of God's children in Christ
John 4: 4-26	Conversation with Jesus leads the Samaritan woman into freer living

Commentary

Walking humbly with the Lord is always a walk into receiving the freedom he opens up before all people. With this in mind we celebrate. We celebrate the mystery of the struggle for freedom, which takes place even in the places where oppression, prejudice and poverty seem to be impossible burdens. The resolute refusal to accept inhuman commands and conditions - like those given by Pharaoh to the midwives of the enslaved Hebrew people - can seem like small actions; but these are often the kinds of actions towards freedom going on in local communities everywhere. Such determined journeying towards fuller living presents a gift of Gospel hope to all people, caught up, in our different ways, within the patterns of inequality across the globe.

The step by step journey into freedom from unjust discrimination and practices of prejudice is brought home to us by the story of Jesus' meeting at the well with the woman of Samaria. Here is a woman who seeks, first of all, to question the prejudices which confront her, as well as to seek ways of alleviating the practical burdens of her life. These concerns are the starting place for her conversation with Jesus. Jesus himself engages in conversation with her on the bases both of his need for her practical help (he is thirsty) and in a mutual exploration of the social prejudices which make this help seem problematic. Bit by bit the way of a freer life is opened up before the woman, as the reality of the complexities of her life are seen more clearly in the light of Jesus' words. In the end these personal insights return the conversation to a place where what divides these two groups of people - where they should worship - is transcended. "Worship in spirit and in truth" is what is required; and here we learn to be free from all that holds us back from life together, life in its fullness.

To be called into greater freedom in Christ, is a calling to deeper communion. Those things which separate us - both as Christians searching for unity, and as people kept apart by unjust traditions and inequalities - keep us captives, and hidden from one another. Our freedom in Christ is,

rather, characterised by that new life in the Spirit, which enables us, together, to stand before the glories of God “with unveiled faces”. It is in this glorious light that we learn to see each other more truly, as we grow in Christ’s likeness towards the fullness of Christian unity.

Prayer

Liberating God, we thank you for the resilience and hopeful faith of those who struggle for dignity and fullness of life. We know that you raise up those who are cast down, and free those who are bound. Your Son Jesus walks with us to show us the path to authentic freedom. May we appreciate what has been given to us, and be strengthened to overcome all within us that enslaves. Send us your Spirit so that the truth shall set us free, so that with voices united we can proclaim your love to the world. God of life, lead us to justice and peace. Amen.

Questions

- Are there times, even in our own Christian communities, when the prejudices and judgments of the world, - with regard to caste, age, gender, race, educational background - stop us seeing each other clearly in the light of God’s glory?
- What small, practical steps can we take, as Christians together, towards the freedom of the Children of God (Romans 8.21) for our churches, and for wider society?

Day 4

Walking as children of the earth

Readings

- Leviticus 25: 8-17 The land is for the common good, not personal gain
 Psalm 65: 5b-13 The fruitful outpouring of God’s grace on the earth
 Romans 8: 18-25 The longing of all creation for redemption
 John 9: 1-11 Jesus’ healing, mud, bodies and water

Commentary

If we are to walk in humility with God, we will need always to be aware of ourselves as part of creation, and recipients of God’s gifts. There is a growing recognition in today’s world that better understanding of our authentic place in creation must become a priority for us. Among Christians, especially, there is a growing awareness of the ways in which ecological concern is a part of “walking humbly with God”, the creator; for all we have is given by God in his creation, and so is not “ours” to do with as we wish. It is for this reason that from 1 September to 4 October Christians are called to observe the Time for Creation—a practice

increasingly observed by many churches. In 1989 the Ecumenical Patriarch, Dimitrios I, proclaimed 1 September as a day of prayer for the environment. The Orthodox Church's liturgical year starts on that day with a commemoration of God's creation of the world. On 4 October, many churches from the Western traditions commemorate Francis of Assisi, the author of the "Canticle of Creation". The beginning and closing of the Time for Creation are thus linked with the concern for creation in the Eastern and the Western traditions of Christianity, respectively.

The Christian story is one of redemption for all creation; it is creation's own story. The belief that, in Jesus, God becomes a human person, in a particular place and time is a central belief around which all Christians gather. It is a shared belief in the Incarnation which carries with it a profound recognition of the importance of creation - of bodies, food, earth, water, and all that feeds our life as people on the planet. Jesus is fully part of this world. It may be slightly shocking to hear how Jesus heals using his spittle and the dust from the earth; but it is true to this real sense of the created world as integral to God's bringing us to new life.

Across the world the earth is often worked by the poorest people, who frequently do not themselves share in the fruitfulness that results. At the same time it is these communities who have a particular care for the earth, as the practical wisdom of working the land is shown forth in their labours.

Care of the earth includes basic questions of how human beings are to live within creation, in ways which are more fully human for all. That the earth - its working and ownership - should so often be a source of economic inequalities, and degrading work practices is a cause for great concern and action for Christians together. The covenantal recognition of these dangers of exploitation with regard to the earth is spoken about in Leviticus' instructions concerning the Year of Jubilee: the land and its fruits are not given to be an opportunity for "taking advantage of one another", rather the working of the land is for the benefit of all. This is not just a "religious idea"; it is tied to very real economic and business practices concerning how the land is managed, bought and sold.

Prayer

God of life, we thank you for the earth, and for those who care for it and bring forth its fruits. May the Spirit, the giver of life, help us to recognise that we are part of creation's web of relationships. May we learn to cherish the earth and listen to creation's groaning. May we truly walk together in the steps of Christ, bringing healing to all that wounds this earth, and ensuring a just sharing of the things that it brings forth. God of life, lead us to justice and peace. Amen.

Questions

- Today's readings invite Christians into a deep unity of action in common concern for the earth. Where do we practice the spirit of the year of Jubilee in our life as Christians together?
- Where, in our Christian communities, are we complicit with things that degrade and exploit the earth? Where can we work more together in learning and teaching reverence for God's creation?

Day 5

Walking as the friends of Jesus

Readings

Song of Solomon 1.5-8	Love and the beloved
Psalms 139.1-6	You have searched me out and known me
3John 2-8	Hospitality to friends in Christ
John 15.12-17	call you friends

Commentary

To walk humbly with God does not mean walking alone. It means walking with those who are those vital signs of God's presence among us, our friends. "But I have called you friends" says Jesus in John's Gospel. Within the freedom of love, we are able to choose our friends, and to be chosen as a friend. "You did not choose me, but I chose you" Jesus says to each of us. Jesus' friendship with each of us transfigures and transcends our relationships with family and society. It speaks of God's deep and abiding love for us all.

The Bible's love poem, the Song of Solomon, has been interpreted in various ways such as the love of God for Israel, or the love of Christ for the Church. It remains the testimony of passion between lovers which transcends the imposed boundaries of society. While the lover says to her beloved "I am black and beautiful", her words come with the plea "do not gaze at me because I am dark." But the lover does gaze, and chooses love, as does God in Christ.

What does the Lord require of those called to walk with Jesus and his friends? In India it is a call to the churches to embrace the Dalits as equal friends of their common friend. Such a call to be friends with the friends of Jesus is another way of understanding the unity of Christians for which we pray this week. Christians around the world are called to be friends with all those who struggle against discrimination and injustice. The walk towards Christian unity requires that we walk humbly with God with—and as—the friends of Jesus.

Prayer

Jesus, from the first moment of our being you offered us your friendship. Your love embraces all peoples, especially those who are excluded or rejected because of human constructions of caste, race or colour. Filled with the confidence and assurance of our dignity in you, may we walk in solidarity towards each other, and embrace each other in the Spirit, as children of God. God of life, lead us to justice and peace. Amen.

Questions

- Who are those in your communities whom Christ calls into your friendship?
- What prevents the friends of Jesus from being friends with one another?
- How does being the friends of the same Jesus challenge the divided churches?

Day 6

Walking beyond barriers

Readings

Ruth 4.13-18 The offspring of Ruth and Boaz

Psalms 113 God the helper of the needy

Ephesians 2.13-16 Christ has broken down the dividing wall between us

Matthew 15.21-28 Jesus and the Canaanite woman

Commentary

To walk humbly with God means walking beyond barriers that divide and damage the children of God. Christians in India are aware of the divisions among themselves. St Paul lived with the devastating divisions in the earliest Christian community between Gentile and Jewish Christians. To this barrier and to every subsequent one, Paul proclaims that Christ “is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall between us.” Elsewhere Paul writes, “As many of you were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3.27-28). In Christ, all the deep barriers of the ancient world—and their modern successors—have been removed because on the Cross Jesus created in himself one new humanity.

In a world in which religious barriers are often difficult to cross, Christians who are a tiny minority in the multi-religious context of India remind us of the importance of interreligious dialogue and cooperation. Matthew’s

Gospel tells of the difficult journey for Jesus—and his disciples—to cross the barriers of religion, culture and gender when he is confronted by a Canaanite woman who pleads with Jesus to cure her daughter. The disciples' visceral instinct to send her away and Jesus' own hesitation are overcome by her faith, and by her need. From hence Jesus and his disciples were able to cross the imposed human barriers and boundaries of the ancient world. Such is already present in the Hebrew Bible. The book of Ruth, the Moabite woman of a different culture and religion, concludes with a list of her offspring with the Israelite Boaz. Their child Obed was the father of Jesse, the father of David. The ancestry of the hero-King of ancient Israel reflects the fact that God's will may be fulfilled when people cross the barriers of religion and culture. The walk with God today requires that we cross the barriers that separate Christians from one another and from people of other faiths. The walk towards Christian unity requires walking humbly with God beyond the barriers that separate us from one another.

Prayer

Father, forgive us for the barriers of greed, prejudice, and contempt that we continually build which separate us within and between churches, from people of other faiths, and from those we consider to be less important than us. May your Spirit give us courage to cross these boundaries, and to tear down the walls that disconnect us from each other. Then with Christ may we step forth into unknown terrain, to carry his message of loving acceptance and unity to all the world. God of life, lead us to justice and peace. Amen.

Questions

- What are the barriers that separate Christians in your community?
- What are the barriers that separate Christians from other religious traditions in your community?
- What are the differences and similarities between walking beyond the barriers that separate Christians from one another, and walking beyond those between Christianity and other religions?

Day 7

Walking in solidarity

Readings

Numbers 27.1-11 The right of inheritance to daughters
 Psalm 15 Who shall abide in God's sanctuary?
 Acts 2.43-47 The disciples held all things in common
 Luke 10.25-37 The Good Samaritan

Commentary

To walk humbly with God means walking in solidarity with all who struggle for justice and peace. This poses a question for those who pray for the unity of Christians this week: what is the unity we seek? The Faith and Order Commission, which includes the members of the fellowship of the World Council of Churches as well as the Catholic Church, understands unity as “visible unity in one faith and in one Eucharistic fellowship.” The ecumenical movement is dedicated to overcome the historic and current barriers that divide Christians, but it does so with a vision of visible unity that links the nature and mission of the Church in the service of the unity of humankind and the overcoming of all that harms the dignity of human beings and keeps us apart. As Faith and Order has said:

The Church is called and empowered to share the suffering of all by advocacy and care for the poor, the needy and the marginalised. This entails critically analysing and exposing unjust structures, and working for their transformation... This faithful witness may involve Christians themselves in suffering for the sake of the Gospel. The Church is called to heal and reconcile broken human relationships and to be God’s instrument in the reconciliation of human division and hatred (*Nature and Mission of the Church*).

There are many examples of such acts of healing and reconciliation by the Indian churches. Until very recently, Christian inheritance laws in India disempowered daughters. The churches supported the demand for a repeal of this archaic law. The story of the daughters of Zelophehad, in which Moses turned to God for justice in support of the rights of the daughters, was invoked to demand justice for women. Thus, Dalit Christians have been moved in their struggles for justice by such biblical witness.

A biblical image of Church united in solidarity with the oppressed is Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan. Like the Dalits, the Good Samaritan is from a despised and outcast community, who is the one in the story who cares for the man abandoned by the wayside, and who proclaims by his solidarity in action, the hope and comfort of the Gospel. The walk towards Christian unity is inseparable from walking humbly with God in solidarity with any and all in need of justice and kindness.

Prayer

Triune God, in your very life you offer us a unique pattern of interdependence, loving relationships and solidarity. Unite us to live our lives in this way. Teach us to share the hope that we find in people who

struggle for life all over the world. May their endurance inspire us to overcome our own divisions, to live in holy accord with one another, and to walk together in solidarity. God of life, lead us to justice and peace. Amen.

Questions

- Who in your community stands in need of the solidarity of the Christian community?
- What churches are, or have been in solidarity with you?
- In what ways would more visible Christian unity enhance the Church's solidarity with those who stand in need of justice and kindness in your context?

Day 8

Walking in celebration

Readings

Habakkuk 3.17-19	Celebrating in a time of hardship
Psalms 100	The worship of God through all the earth
Philippians 4.4-9	Rejoice in the Lord always
Luke 1:46-55	The Song of Mary

Commentary

To walk humbly with God means to walk in celebration. The visitor to India is struck by the hardships and struggles endured by Dalits, but at the same time by their sense of hope and celebration.

Hope and celebration occur together in today's biblical readings. The prophet Habakkuk rejoices in the Lord at a time of drought and crop failure. Such testimony that God will walk with his people in their difficulties is a celebration of hope. The Blessed Virgin Mary walks to her cousin Elizabeth in order to celebrate her pregnancy. She sings her *Magnificat* as a song of hope even before the birth of her child. And from prison, Paul exhorts the Christian community at Philippi to celebration: "Rejoice in the Lord always." In the Bible, celebration is linked to hope in God's faithfulness.

The celebratory aspects of Dalit culture bear similar testimony to a gospel of faith and hope, forged out of the crucible of the Dalit experience of struggle for dignity and resilient survival. As we pray for Christian unity this week, we turn to the celebration of life that we see in India with focus on the faithfulness of Dalits to their Christian identity in the context of their struggles for life. Our celebration for a unity among Christians

which has yet to be achieved likewise occurs in hope and struggle. It is grounded in hope that Christ's prayer that we may be one will be achieved in God's time and through God's means. It is grounded in gratitude that unity is God's gift, and in recognition of the unity we already experience as the friends of Jesus, expressed in one baptism. It is grounded in the conviction that God calls each of us to work for that unity, and that all our efforts will be used by God, trusting with St Paul "in everything by prayer and thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." The walk towards Christian unity requires that we walk humbly with God in celebration, in prayer, and in hope.

Prayer

Gracious God, may your Holy Spirit fill our communities with joy and celebration, so that we can cherish the unity we already share, and zealously continue in the search for visible unity. We rejoice in the faith and hope of peoples who refuse to allow their dignity to be diminished, seeing in them your wonderful grace and your promise of freedom. Teach us to share in their joy and learn from their faithful endurance. Rekindle our hope and sustain our resolve, that in Christ's name we may walk together in love, raising a united voice of praise, and singing together one prayer of adoration. God of life, lead us to justice and peace. Amen.

Questions

- What are the struggles towards justice in your community?
What are the causes for celebration on the way?
- What are the struggles towards Christian unity in your community?
What are the causes for celebration along the way?

INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIANITY IN INDIA: THE CONTEXT FOR THE CHURCHES[\[3\]](#)

The churches in India have had a complex and rich history. The Christian population continues to be significantly engaged in the life of the nation, especially in the areas of education and health care, a heritage from the Christian missionary movement which began in the 1500s. Through these services and through conversions to Christianity, the major contribution made by the missions was to empower the socially discriminated sections of Indian society to gain dignity and self respect. Christianity is India's third-largest religion with approximately 24 million followers, constituting roughly 2.3% of India's population of 1.2 billion people. These are the figures based on the 2001 census – the findings of the 2011 census which is ongoing suggests a marginal increase in the number of Christians in India. Of the Christian population the largest number adhere to the

Roman Catholic Church. Churches in the Eastern tradition include the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, the Malabar Independent Syrian Church, the Malankara Jacobite Syrian Church, the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian, and the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church Church which are prominent in Kerala. Major Protestant denominations include the Church of South India (CSI), the Church of North India (CNI), Presbyterians, Baptists, Lutherans and evangelical communities.

There has been recent contestation of the way in which the history of the Indian churches has been depicted – as having their origins in the Western Missionary movements. Based on the assumption sometimes made that in recent years the centre of Christianity is “moving to the South”, Ninan Koshy writes: “Those who say that the ‘day of Southern Christianity is dawning’ are apparently oblivious of the fact that *the dawn of Christianity was in the South...* What is happening is not the extension of a Western religion but the renaissance of a religion that is Asian in its origin and early history.”^[4]

According to the tradition of the *Mar Thoma* or “Church of Thomas,” St Thomas evangelized along the Malabar Coast of Kerala State in southwest India. He reputedly preached to all classes of people and had about seventeen thousand converts, including members of the four principal castes. According to legend, St Thomas was martyred at Chennai, and his tomb is now the site of San Thome Cathedral. Koshy quotes the renowned Asian historian K.M. Panikkar who had said that, “Christianity has existed in different parts of Persia, India and China from the earliest times. The Church in Malabar claims apostolic origin from St. Thomas, and in any case its existence is attested by outside authority as early as AD 182”.

Those early Indian Christians who came in contact with that East Syrian (Persian) tradition are today called the Church of the East or the Chaldean Church. There is later evidence that Nestorian Christians, who flourished in Persia, reached China in the seventh century.^[5] From this it can be deduced that Nestorian merchants and missionaries, and others from Syria, came to India in those early centuries. This is the origin of the Orthodox churches in India, which have remained a strong and faithful presence in India. In the centuries that followed, other groups from Syria, Persia and Babylonia increased the Christian presence, while the first Roman Catholic missionary, Jordanus Catalani, established a diocese in the early fourteenth century.

Mission history and the anticipation of the ecumenical movement

As mentioned above, the other significant stream of Indian Christianity is connected with missionary activity that coincided with the colonization project and the establishment of European powers in India. Roman Catholic Missionary activity began under the Portuguese colonists in the late 15th century, and continued under figures such as St Francis Xavier and his fellow Jesuits. While the first Protestant mission came to India at Tranquebar in 1706, the nineteenth century saw the significant development of Protestant missions. It is generally agreed that the Western missionary movement made a significant contribution to the growth of Christianity in India.

Mission history in India is a complex mosaic – not least because of the vastness of the country and the multiplicity of mission agencies who tried to establish themselves here. Each came with their preconceptions and doctrinal differences, as well their own relationships with colonizing powers. However, having started with a single minded intention to evangelize, the missions soon recognized that they also needed to transmit education and skills to local populations as well as engage in the development of the people who sought conversion to the Christian faith. The early efforts of the missionary movement to deliver health to the people became the model for the country's health care systems after India gained independence in 1948.

Through its support of the missionaries' educational programmes, the colonial government sought to create orderly and disciplined citizens who could staff its administrative apparatus. However, the cultural and social effects of missionary preaching and community building, included an emphasis on human rights, sometimes aided by the missionaries themselves. These efforts contributed to the formation of an Indian people who felt themselves able to criticize existing systems and to protest against the injustice of colonial rule, culminating in a freedom struggle from colonialism.

It is important to mention, in addition, the phenomenal growth of Christianity and the establishment of churches in North East India which covers seven states to the north and east of Bangladesh and is linked to the rest of India through the state of West Bengal. In these states 90 percent of the population of Nagaland, 87 percent of Mizoram and 71 per cent of Meghalaya is Christian. With the support and backing of the colonial rulers, the American Baptist Mission and the Welsh Presbyterian Mission began their work in around 1816 among the predominantly tribal (or indigenous) populations who live in this region. Today two thirds of the Christians in these states trace their origins to these two missions. Roman Catholic missionaries arrived there in 1850, and over the centuries

have contributed to the development of the educational infrastructure of the region. In the period after the Second World War, Pentecostals and similar groups and missions arrived in the region influencing forms of worship and spirituality in these states. The development of indigenous ecclesiastical structures in this region with the exclusion of foreign missionaries by the Indian government in this politically sensitive region has ensured the development of a Christianity rooted in the culture of the Indigenous peoples. The North East India Christian Council and the National Council of Churches in India have contributed to ecumenical efforts in this region.

Another state where the Christian population is strong is Kerala, where roughly twenty per cent of the people are Christians. Among them, up to three million believers are Orthodox Christians. From the fourth century onwards, these Christians had links with the Syrian Patriarchate of Antioch, from which the West Syriac liturgical and ecclesial order of the Syrian Orthodox tradition came into being in India. Those who maintain this link belong to the Malankara Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church. Other Orthodox Christians maintain that the Antiochian connection began only in the sixteenth century; those who hold this position form the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, (also known as the Indian Orthodox Church) which became an autocephalous church with the establishment of an Indian Catholicate in 1912. In the sixteenth century Roman Catholic missionaries reached Kerala, and established the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church. Under the influence of Protestant missionaries working among the Syrian Christians, the Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar emerged as a distinct community in the early nineteenth century.

The ecumenical movement in India

The missionary movement in India can be said to have impacted the ecumenical movement in two ways with very different outcomes. Firstly, it gave rise to the longing for unity and joint action among the churches. The growth of the world-wide ecumenical movement led to important ecumenical developments in India too, notable among which was the birth of the Church of South India in 1947 – the first expression of organic union of churches anywhere in the world – and some years later the formation of the Church of North India. It also introduced other important ecumenical instruments – the Young Men’s Christian Association, the Young Women’s Christian Association, the National Council of Churches in India and the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India, as well as the Student Christian Movement and the All India Catholic University Federation. But secondly, it also brought to India inherited denominational identities. “The sad thing is that, before becoming first a confessing Church in the missionary situation, the younger churches were prematurely projected into a “confessional” situation which was not their

own, before they became a Community of Christ they were told to become a Presbyterian, Lutheran, Methodist or Anglican church.”^[6]

In 1965, the Second Vatican Council ushered in a new spirit of dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the other churches that increased cooperation between them in India too. The Catholic Bishops’ Conference in India works closely with the National Council of Churches, particularly in relating with the government. Today, they lobby for government intervention when Christians are targeted in communal riots; they work together on legislation to protect minority rights, which include the rights of Dalit Christians, and freedom of religion.

As churches around the world prepare for the celebration of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in 2013, the churches in India mark two important ecumenical milestones of their own. One hundred years ago in 1912, the Student Christian Movement of India (SCMI), the oldest youth ecumenical organization of university students in India, began when a group of university students gathered for an All India Students Conference arranged by the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) at the Serampore College in West Bengal. Members of the Indian YMCA decided to create a separate unit for university students. Following discussions at the Serampore meeting, an organization for Indian university students, independent of the YMCA was born. For the past hundred years the SCM India has served a fellowship of students, teachers and senior friends with a commitment to translate Christian faith into action. Spread across thirteen geographical regions of the country, SCMI has throughout its existence inspired students to participate in the transformation of church and society. The SCMI has nurtured values of ecumenism, unity, justice and peace. It has shaped young leaders with the qualities of integrity and commitment. The SCMI encourages partnership with all church traditions, people of all faiths, and with other youth ecumenical organizations such as the YWCA, the YMCA, and the All India Catholic University Federation (AICUF). It is affiliated to the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF).

In preparing the materials for the 2013 WPCU, the youth department of the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) was an important partner. The NCCI is the united expression of the Protestant and Orthodox churches in India and represents 13 million Christians throughout the country. It provides a platform for thought and action by bringing together the Churches and other Christian organizations for mutual consultation, assistance and action in all matters related to Christian life and witness in India. Orthodox Christians have played a pivotal role in the ecumenical movement in India. Significantly, the NCCI also celebrates its centenary in 2014. The Council and its members have been actively engaged in nation building over these 100 years. It is an autonomous

Council which embraces, promotes and coordinates the various ministries of the churches. The NCCI Youth Commission promotes the ecumenical and interreligious activities at a national level.

The third partner in the preparation of the WPCU materials is the All India Catholic University Federation which is a movement of Catholic students with a vision of a new and just society. Founded in 1915 as the Catholic Young Men's Guild (CYMG), it became the AICUF in 1949 as a national student movement. It is recognised by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India and is affiliated to the Pax Romana, the International Movement of Catholic Students. Over the years the AICUF has gone through a history of constant rediscovery and re-creation, as it seeks to address the emerging needs and realities of university, church and the wider Indian society. AICUF has also worked with the SCM and other youth movements in India on issues that affect the life of the nation.

Becoming the Church in India

There are two critical issues facing the Christianity in India: casteism and identity.

Casteism, both within and between the churches poses severe challenges for the unity of Christians in India and therefore, for the moral and ecclesial witness of the Church as the one body of Christ. As a church-dividing issue, casteism is consequently an acute doctrinal issue. Accordingly, this issue has been chosen to highlight the ways in which the quest for justice and peace is intrinsic to prayer for Christian unity.

The Indian churches of mission origin have struggled to break away from their missionary past and assert their own identity and calling as an Indian church. The Indian Ecumenist M.M. Thomas, recognizing the inevitable link with western culture because of the years of colonial rule, affirms that as Christians in India we are called to critical engagement with the national aspirations of our nation, as churches together: "Christians need not be apologetic about their connection with western culture. But Christians have to be apologetic about their uncritical approach to western culture. Today, when our national goals are western, we are not able to evaluate them critically in the name of Christ. Our contribution to "secular" ecumenism thus depends on our having a "Christian" ecumenism ourselves.^[7]

The churches in India have attempted to define what this means to their life and witness in a multi religious context where, Christians are a very small minority. Situated in the midst of great living faiths, Christians in

India have contributed significantly by providing skilled leadership and theological freshness to ecumenical discussions on dialogue and cooperation with people of other faiths.

Reading Church history from the view of the majority in the Church

The most significant contribution of the missionary movement in terms of conversions to Christianity was the way in which many of the poor and outcaste in India experienced conversion to Christ as freedom from religious and ritual discrimination. At a recent international colloquium, Prof. Dr. Susie Tharu, an eminent writer, and social scientist declared that “the genius of the Indian church is its Dalitness”.^[8] It is said that 80-90% of the Indian church are of Dalit origin. In some parts of India 100% Christians are Dalit converts.

On the one hand, the issue of conversion is a challenge in the global arena, where inter-religious relations must be balanced with the call to proclaim the Gospel. Dalits in India, on the other hand, would claim that Dalit conversion from Hinduism has been an important form of Dalit dissent. At the outset of World War I approximately one million of the Christians in India were Dalits, today it is approximately twenty-four million. Conversions to Christianity, often done at the behest of oppressed outcaste groups themselves, challenged not just the upper caste Hindus, but also upper caste converts to Christianity, and even the missionaries themselves.^[9] Unhappily, this history has received little attention: “Dalit Christian history was only a very minor sub-plot in the much larger stories of either missions or churches...”^[10]

Dalits continue to experience oppression and exclusion, to the extent where they can recognize a greater sense of identity and common struggle with Dalits of other faiths than within the Christian community. Like the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, this scandal must challenge all Christians to ask themselves about the limits and integrity of their commitment to Christian unity.

The churches stay committed

In the midst of the many challenges, the churches in India have tried to stay true to their course and are slowly growing – as they continue to strengthen ecumenical partnerships and forge new areas of ministry. To be a minority has sometimes pushed the churches into a survival mode rather than to conscious and bold affirmations of their witness in India. Christian presence in India has to be built as “the future of the hopeless... The Cross of Christ, the community of the suffering Christ and the sign of the oppressed creation show us the place of Christian presence.”^[11]

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

Themes 1968-2013

In 1968, materials jointly prepared by the WCC Faith and Order Commission and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity were first used.

- 1968** To the praise of his glory (Ephesians 1: 14)
Pour la louange de sa gloire
- 1969** Called to freedom (Galatians 5: 13)
Appelés à la liberté (*Preparatory meeting held in Rome, Italy*)
- 1970** We are fellow workers for God (1 Corinthians 3: 9)
Nous sommes les coopérateurs de Dieu (*Preparatory meeting held at the Monastery of Niederaltaich, Federal Republic of Germany*)
- 1971** ...and the communion of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 13:13)
...et la communion du Saint-Esprit
- 1972** I give you a new commandment (John 13: 34)
Je vous donne un commandement nouveau (*Preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland*)
- 1973** Lord, teach us to pray (Luke 11: 1)
Seigneur, apprends-nous à prier (*Preparatory meeting held at the Abbey of Montserrat, Spain*)
- 1974** That every tongue confess: Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2: 1-13) Que tous confessent: Jésus-Christ est Seigneur
(*Preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland*)
- 1975** God's purpose: all things in Christ (Ephesians 1: 3-10)
La volonté du Père: Tout réunir sous un seul chef, le Christ
(*Material from an Australian group. Preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland*)
- 1976** We shall be like him (1 John 3: 2)
or, Called to become what we are Appelés à devenir ce que nous sommes (*Material from Caribbean Conference of Churches. Preparatory meeting held in Rome, Italy*)
- 1977** Enduring together in hope (Romans 5: 1-5)
L'espérance ne déçoit pas (*Material from Lebanon, in the midst of a civil war. Preparatory meeting held in Geneva*)
- 1978** No longer strangers (Ephesians 2: 13-22)
Vous n'êtes plus des étrangers (*Material from an ecumenical team in Manchester, England*)
- 1979** Serve one another to the glory of God (1 Peter 4: 7-11)
Soyez au service les uns des autres pour la gloire de Dieu

- (Material from Argentina - preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland)*
- 1980** Your kingdom come (Matthew 6: 10) Que ton règne vienne!
(Material from an ecumenical group in Berlin, German Democratic Republic -preparatory meeting held in Milan)
- 1981** One Spirit - many gifts - one body (1 Corinthians 12: 3b-13)
Un seul esprit - des dons divers - un seul corps *(Material from Graymoor Fathers, USA - preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland)*
- 1982** May all find their home in you, O Lord (Psalm 84) Que tous trouvent leur demeure en Toi, Seigneur *(Material from Kenya - preparatory meeting held in Milan, Italy)*
- 1983** Jesus Christ - the Life of the World (1 John 1: 1-4)
Jesus Christ - La Vie du Monde *(Material from an ecumenical group in Ireland - preparatory meeting held in Céligny (Bossey), Switzerland)*
- 1984** Called to be one through the cross of our Lord (1 Cor 2: 2 and Col 1: 20) Appelés à l'unité par la croix de notre Seigneur
(Preparatory meeting held in Venice, Italy)
- 1985** From death to life with Christ (Ephesians 2: 4-7)
De la mort à la vie avec le Christ *(Material from Jamaica - preparatory meeting held in Grandchamp, Switzerland)*
- 1986** You shall be my witnesses (Acts 1: 6-8)
Vous serez mes témoins *(Material from Yugoslavia (Slovenia), preparatory meeting held in Yugoslavia)*
- 1987** United in Christ - a New Creation (2 Corinthians 5: 17-6: 4a)
Unis dans le Christ - une nouvelle création *(Material from England, preparatory meeting held in Taizé, France)*
- 1988** The love of God casts out fear (1 John 4: 18)
L'Amour de Dieu bannit la Crainte *(Material from Italy - preparatory meeting held in Pinerolo, Italy)*
- 1989** Building community: one body in Christ (Romans 12: 5-6a)
Bâtir la communauté: Un seul corps en Christ *(Material from Canada - preparatory meeting held in Whaley Bridge, England)*
- 1990** That they all may be one...That the world may believe (John 17)
Que tous soient un...Afin que le monde croie *(Material from Spain - preparatory meeting held in Madrid, Spain)*
- 1991** Praise the Lord, all you nations! (Psalm 117 and Romans 15: 5-13)
Nations, louez toutes le Seigneur *(Material from Germany - preparatory meeting held in Rotenburg an der Fulda, Federal Republic of Germany)*

- 1992** I am with you always ...Go, therefore (Matthew 28: 16-20)
Je suis avec vous...allez donc(*Material from Belgium - preparatory meeting held in Bruges, Belgium*)
- 1993** Bearing the fruit of the Spirit for Christian unity (Galatians 5: 22-23)
Pour l'unité: laisser mûrir en nous les fruits de l'Esprit
(*Material from Zaire - preparatory meeting held near Zurich, Switzerland*)
- 1994** The household of God: called to be one in heart and mind
(Acts 4: 23-37) La maison de Dieu: Appelés à être un dans le cœur et dans l'esprit (*Material from Ireland - preparatory meeting held in Dublin, Republic of Ireland*)
- 1995** Koinonia: communion in God and with one another (John 15: 1-17)
La koinonia: communion en Dieu et les uns avec les autres
(*Material from Faith and Order, preparatory meeting held in Bristol, England*)
- 1996** Behold, I stand at the door and knock (Revelation 3: 14-22)
Je me tiens à la porte et je frappe(*Preparatory material from Portugal, meeting held in Lisbon, Portugal*)
- 1997** We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God
(2 Corinthians 5: 20) Au nom du Christ, laissez-vous reconcilier avec Dieu(*Material from Nordic Ecumenical Council, preparatory meeting held in Stockholm, Sweden*)
- 1998** The Spirit helps us in our weakness (Romans 8: 14-27)
L'Esprit aussi vient en aide à notre faiblesse(*Preparatory material from France, meeting held in Paris, France*)
- 1999** He will dwell with them as their God, they will be his peoples
(Revelation 21: 1-7) Dieu demeurera avec eux. Ils seront ses peuples et lui sera le Dieu qui est avec eux (*Preparatory material from Malaysia, meeting held in Monastery of Bose, Italy*)
- 2000** Blessed be God who has blessed us in Christ (Ephesians 1: 3-14)
Béni soit Dieu, qui nous a bénis en Christ(*Preparatory material from the Middle East Council of Churches, meeting held La Verna, Italy*)
- 2001** I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life (John 14: 1-6)
Je suis le chemin, et la vérité et la vie(*Preparatory material from Romania and meeting held at Vulcan, Romania*)
- 2002** For with you is the fountain of life (Psalm 36: 5-9)
Car chez toi est la fontaine de la vie (Psalm 35, 6-10)
(*Preparatory material CEEC and CEC, meeting near Augsburg, Germany*)
- 2003** We have this treasure in clay jars (2 Corinthians 4: 4-18)
Car nous avons ce trésor dans des vases d'argile

- (*Preparatory material churches in Argentina, meeting at Los Rubios, Spain*)
- 2004** My peace I give to you (John 14: 23-31; John 14: 27)
Je vous donne ma paix (*Preparatory material from Aleppo, Syria - meeting in Palermo, Sicily*)
- 2005** Christ, the one foundation of the church (1 Corinthians 3 1-23)
Le Christ, unique fondement de l'Église (*Preparatory material from Slovakia - meeting in Piestaðy, Slovakia*)
- 2006** Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am among them (Mt 18: 18-20) Là où deux ou trois se trouvent réunis en mon nom, je suis au milieu d'eux. (*Preparatory material from Ireland - meeting held in Prosperous, Co. Kildare, Ireland*)
- 2007** He even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak (Mk 7: 31-37)
Il fait entendre les sourds et parler les muets (*Preparatory material from South Africa – meeting held in Faverges, France*)
- 2008** Pray without ceasing (1 Thess 5: (12a) 13b-18)
Priez sans cesse (*Preparatory material from USA – meeting held in Graymoor, Garrison, USA*)
- 2009** That they may become one in your hand (Ezek 37: 15-28)
Ils seront unis dans ta main (Ezek 37, 15-28) (*Preparatory material from Korea – meeting held in Marseilles, France*)
- 2010** You are witnesses of these things (Luke 24:48) ...de tout cela, c'est vous qui êtes les témoins (*Preparatory material from Scotland – meeting held in Glasgow, Scotland*)
- 2011** One in the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer (cf. Acts 2:42) Unis dans l'enseignement des apôtres, la communion fraternelle, la fraction du pain et la prière (*Preparatory material from Jerusalem – meeting held in Saydnaya, Syria*)
- 2012** We will all be Changed by the Victory of our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Cor 15:51-58) Tous, nous serons transformés par la victoire de notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ (*Preparatory material from Poland – meeting held in Warsaw, Poland*)
- 2013** What does God require of us? (cf. Mi 6, 6-8) Que nous demande le Seigneur ? (*Preparatory material from India – meeting held in Bangalore, India*)

KEY DATES IN THE HISTORY OF THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

1740 In Scotland a Pentecostal movement arose, with North American links, whose revivalist message included prayers for and with all churches.

1820 The Rev. James Haldane Stewart publishes “Hints for the General Union of Christians for the Outpouring of the Spirit”.

1840 The Rev. Ignatius Spencer, a convert to Roman Catholicism, suggests a ‘Union of Prayer for Unity’.

1867 The First Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops emphasizes prayer for unity in the Preamble to its Resolutions.

1894 Pope Leo XIII encourages the practice of a Prayer Octave for Unity in the context of Pentecost.

1908 First observance of the ‘Church Unity Octave’ initiated by the Rev. Paul Wattson.

1926 The Faith and Order movement begins publishing “Suggestions for an Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity”.

1935 Abbé Paul Couturier of France advocates the ‘Universal Week of Prayer for Christian Unity’ on the inclusive basis of prayer for “the unity Christ wills by the means he wills”.

1958 Unité Chrétienne (Lyons, France) and the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches begin co-operative preparation of materials for the Week of Prayer.

1964 In Jerusalem, Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I prayed together Jesus’ prayer “that they all may be one” (John 17).

1964 The Decree on Ecumenism of Vatican II emphasizes that prayer is the soul of the ecumenical movement and encourages observance of the Week of Prayer.

1966 The Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity [now known as the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity] begin official joint preparation of the Week of Prayer material.

1968 First official use of Week of Prayer material prepared jointly by Faith and Order and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (now known as the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity).

1975 First use of Week of Prayer material based on a draft text prepared by a local ecumenical group. An Australian group was the first to take up this plan in preparing the 1975 initial draft.

1988 Week of Prayer materials were used in the inaugural worship for The Christian Federation of Malaysia, which links the major Christian groupings in that country.

1994 International group preparing text for 1996 included representatives from YMCA and YWCA.

2004 Agreement reached that resources for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity be jointly published and produced in the same format by Faith and Order (WCC) and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (Catholic Church).

2008 Commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. (Its predecessor, the Church Unity Octave, was first observed in 1908).

[1] *Scripture quotations: The scripture quotations contained herein are from The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1989, 1995, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, and are used with permission. All rights reserved.*

[2] [Papal address to Bishops of Madras-Mylapore, Madurai and Pondicherry-Cuddalore, 17 November 2003.](#)

[3] This text is reproduced under the sole authority and responsibility of the ecumenical group in India which came together to write the source texts for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2013.

[4] Ninan Koshy, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement in Asia, Volume I*, (Hong Kong: Christian Conference of Asia, Asia-Pacific WSCF, 2004). p.6

[5] *Ibid*, p.10

[6] Hans-Ruedi Weber, *Out of all Continents and Nations: A Review of Regional Developments in the Ecumenical Movement, A History of the Ecumenical Movement Volume 2, 1948-1968*, Ed. Harold C.Fey (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1970). p.72-73

[7] M. M Thomas, *The Common Evangelistic Task of the Churches in Asia*, Papers and Minutes of the EACC. Prapat, Indonesia, 1957, Quoted by Koshy, op cit. p. 28

[8] Susie Tharu in her valedictory address at a International Colloquium on Caste, Religion and Culture, organized by the World Council of Churches, the Centre for Social Studies and Culture, the National Council of Churches in India and the Student Christian Movement of India in Cochin, Kerala from 1-4 May 2011. It is important to briefly define who a Dalit is in India. The caste structure of Hinduism is four tiered and hierarchical – the Brahmins or priestly caste; the Kshatriyas or rulers and warriors; the Vaishyas or the merchants; and the Shudras or the labourers. The first three are the ritually pure and socio-economically dominant or the twice born. The fourth are ritually suspect and socio-economically dominated and are the once born. Outside this structure are the 160-180 million in India alone, who are branded as the “Outcastes”, the “Untouchables”, the “Exterior caste”, the “Depressed caste” or the “Pariah” – or the Dalits or “broken people”. The term Dalits, is used not to signify another caste identity but rather aspires to name an anti-caste collective movement. For this explanation see the article by Sathianathan Clarke, “Dalit theology: An Introductory and Interpretive Theological Exposition, in *Dalit Theology in the Twenty-first Century, Discordant Voices, Discerning Pathways*. Ed. Sathianathan Clarke, Deenabandhu Manchala and Philip Vinod Peacock, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 4-5

[9] See for instance Stanley, Brian, 2009, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh, 1910*, Studies in the History of Christian Missions, William B. Eerdmann’s Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, UK. p.153-154

[10] Webster John C.B., “Dalit Christian History: Themes And Trends”, Paper presented at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, Department of History, February 2011, New Delhi. Manuscript. John Webster has written extensively on Dalit Christian history including a path breaking book *The Dalit Christians: A History*, 1992, (which has gone into a third edition). Edwin Ellen Press, San Francisco.

[11] Jurgen Moltmann, *Theology Today*, Vol 28 No. 1, April 1971, 6-23. Princeton Theological Seminary, Westminster John Knox Press, USA.

Annexe 5

‘After falling in love, I saw the reality of caste’: E. Ilavarasan

tags: [caste](#), [Dalits](#), [Ilavarasan](#), [Tamil Nadu](#), [Vanniyars](#)
by [Shivam Vij](#)

July 5, 2013

Dalit youth E. ILAVARASAN, whose marriage to a Vanniyar girl had resulted in caste violence in Tamil Nadu last year, was [found dead](#) on a railway track yesterday. Given below is an interview Ilavarasan [gave](#) to KAVIN MALAR and was published in the Tamil edition of India Today magazine. This translation is by PRAKASH VENKATESAN.



Did you realise you were going to be in the headlines in TN when you got married?

No. Certainly not. I thought ours would be just like any other marriage. Divya thought so too. We thought they (Divya’s parents) would be angry initially but can be eventually reconciled. We simply did not expect these things would happen. I now can really understand the horrendous nature of caste and the heinous things it is capable of after falling in love.

Why do you think Divya is suddenly saying now that she wants to go with her mother?

Someone is operating behind the scenes. They have threatened that her mother’s life and mine would be in danger if Divya does not return back. Probably that is why she has taken such a decision. She can’t live without me. She won’t be able to take this three weeks separation. She used to tell me often that she can’t live without me even for an hour. The plan to separate us was plotted in PMK’s head office. Now they have executed it.

Did you and Divya had any problems after your marriage?

No. We were happy. Though we were running from place to place in fear, we were quite happy to be together.

When did the marriage happen?

I was on my way to Trichy for a football match. When I was in Omalur, I got a call from Divya saying that people in her house are trying to get her married to someone else. She asked me to take her with me. We went to Andhra Pradesh and got married there.

How is the relationship between you and Divya's parents?

Divya's father was a good person. He was indifferent to caste. We still don't believe he committed suicide because of our marriage. Divya's mother, she was not that opposing either. After our marriage her brothers are not talking to her. But people around her are instigating her. They knew that I was going to get an appointment order to join the police force and filed a case against me and deliberately made efforts against it to get the order cancelled. These were not done by her mother. She is being compelled by people of her caste to do these deeds.

How did you feel when three Dalit villages were burnt in Dharmapuri?

Guilty. We even thought about committing suicide. Not even in our dreams we thought her father would commit suicide. She was deeply affected by her father's death. She cried a lot. We can not forget that November 7th. People from her side said they want to meet Divya and take her back with them. I told them it is certainly possible to talk. In November 7th, a meeting was arranged between both the sides in Thoppur. Her father was not present there. Divya's mother asked her to return back but Divya firmly refused. Half an hour after the meeting we got the news of her father's suicide and villages being burnt. We saw it in TV. The caste in which I was born into is their problem. People who are capable of doing these deeds can go to any extent.

What are you going to do to get Divya back?

I will keep on fighting. Authorities know who burnt three villages. But they have not taken any action. They have to. They have to publicly announce where Divya is. They have to investigate and publicly announce about the people who are directly and indirectly trying to separate us. The decision to be separated would not have been from her heart. I want to talk with Divya first. After that, am quite certain everything would be okay.
