

A Study on Socio – Economic status of Dalit Christians in Tirunelveli District of Tamil Nadu

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Abstract

This paper reviews the empirical literature on Excluded people (Dalit Christian) in Indian Society Entering into Scheduled caste converted Christian is more painful and humiliating to compare than other communities because of the discrimination of the society. Especially Scheduled caste converted Christian in India more suffering peoples. The problem of Dalit has elicited considerable interest in the minds of researchers in recent times. In this study main objectives is to identify the socio - economic status of Dalit Christians in Tirunelveli District and to suggest a suitable action plan for their sustainable development. Tools for Data Collation In the present study data were both 'primary' as well as 'secondary' sources. The dates were collected primary sources constituted of the respondent of all age groups and the sample size was study has been drawn by using census method. Total sample selected for the study are 1269 respondents, in this study would used family census method. The researcher was selected five villages in Tirunelveli Taluks in Tirunelveli District and five villages have selected based village, urban, semi – urban in this method were selected areas. Design of the Study here, descriptive design will be used to describe the data. The collected data were analysed with the help of descriptive and simple percentage. The collected data were analyzed to get a better understanding of

the socio economic statues of Dalit Christain in Tirunelveli district.

Key words:

Christians; discrimination; Excluded people; Indian Society; Dalit

Introduction:

India is a unique country with its distinct cultural, linguistic, ethnic and religious diversity. Hinduism is the oldest religion in the world. Hinduism is world's third largest religion after Christianity and Islam. Hinduism is the dominant religion in India, About 80 per cent of the population follows Hinduism (in many forms and ways) Hindus are divided into four castes - Brahmins or the scholars, Kshatriyas or the warriors and kings, Vaishyas or the businessmen and the clergy class and the Shudras or the servant class. There are untouchables or the casteless too. All these castes are further sub-divided into number of other sub-castes.

12 per cent of the population embraced Islam they are further sub-divided into various sects, the most prominent being Shias and Sunnis. India's contact with Islam had begun much earlier, the real push came in the 8th century when the province of Sindh was conquered. The influence of Islam on Indian society is much stronger.

Christianity is one of the prominent religions in India. Christianity is the

second largest minority community encompassing 2.5 per cent population in India. It is interesting to note that the Christian population in India is more than the entire population of Australia and New Zealand or total population of a number of countries in Europe. Other Religions such as Sikhism, Jainism, Buddhism, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Tribal Religions and others cover another 5.5 per cent of the population.

Reason for Dalits to Embrace Christianity in India

The historical experience of oppression and dehumanisation, and from years of reformatory work for liberation of Dalits, Ambedkar came to the fundamental conclusion that the road to social mobility was closed for Dalits within the Hindu fold and voiced opinion that the path of political participation was sealed for the untouchables forever. He was convinced that economic opportunities had been snatched from Dalits from the very beginning of the establishment of caste system. Ambedkar strongly believed that only religious route is left open for the downtrodden of Indian society. Therefore, he advocated and urged Dalits to take the path of conversions. Arguing about the need for conversions to attain equal status Ambedkar stated, "To get human treatment, convert yourselves, convert for getting organised, convert for becoming strong, convert for securing equality, convert for getting liberty, and convert so that your domestic life may be happy." He said, "Choose any religion which gives you equality of status and treatment." Dalits were looking for social liberation, dignity, identity and equality as human beings.

Conversion to Christianity

The idea of Dalits converting to another religion is a means of fighting the Indian caste system. Ambedkar said, "Because we have the misfortune of calling ourselves Hindus we are treated thus. If we were members of another faith none would dare treat us so. Choose any religion which gives you equality of status and treatment. We shall repair the mistakes now. I had the misfortune of being born with the stigma of an untouchable. However, it is not my fault, but I will not die a Hindu, for this is in my power." Therefore, the main reason for Dalits to convert to another religion, including Christianity, is for dignity, equality and justice.

Christianity preached that there is no discrimination and everyone who belongs to this religion is considered equal with other Christians. Because all those believed in Jesus Christ become the children of God. Therefore, it preached brotherhood of all believers in Jesus Christ. Dalits who were seeking to get an equal status in society found a ray of hope in this new religion. Thus, Dalits used Christianity as a way of liberation from the bondage of Hindu caste system to the new religion that promised equality, and human dignity, value and rights as anybody else.

Historical data abound with the fact that there have been caste segregation and discrimination within the church right from its inception. Christianity made its presence in India in the 1st century itself with the arrival of St. Thomas, one of the disciples of Jesus Christ. The early missionaries from Syria, Portugal, Italy and Spain have converted mostly Brahmins, other dominant castes and fisher people. The gates of Christianity were open for others only in 17th and 18th centuries. Dalits started embracing Christianity in a large scale mainly after the arrival of Protestant missionaries from 1706 onwards who involved in educational, social and medical services among them.

The Problem

The Dalit Christians suffer the same socio educational and economic disabilities like the Dalits of the other faith. The change of Religion does not change their social, economical and educational status. It is evident that the Dalit Christians are subject to atrocities, violence and disabilities solely because they suffer the stigma of the Untouchability. Most of the Dalits whether they are the Hindus or the Christians, they often live together side by side, while the other Caste people, the Hindus or the Christians live separately. Whenever there is any killing or violence, the Caste people do not discriminate between the Hindus and the Christians. Even the Caste Christians do not treat the Dalit Christians as equals. Though the Dalit Christians undergo the same unjust Caste discrimination as the other religious Dalits, the Christian Dalits are deprived of the privileges of protection of Civil Rights Act and Prevention of Atrocities Act 1989.

Research Methodology

Objectives of the study

- *To identify the socio - economic status of Dalit Christians in Thirunelveli District*
- *To suggest a suitable action plan for their sustainable development*

Tools for Data Collation

In the present study data were both 'primary' as well as 'secondary' sources. The data were collected primary sources constituted of the respondent of 1 year and above and were by Participatory scientific observation, Interview schedule, and Secondary sources include census reports, articles, newspaper reports, journals and books.

Sample Size

The study has been drawn by using census method. Total sample selected for the study are 1269 respondents, in this study would use family census method. The researcher was selected five villages in Tirunelveli Taluk in Tirunelveli District and five villages have selected based on village, urban, semi – urban, in this method selected area total respondents data have collected.

Design of the Study

Here, descriptive design will be used to describe the data. Descriptive research design is a scientific method which involves observing and describing the behaviour of a subject without influencing it in any way.

Collection of Data

The collected data were analysed with the help of descriptive and simple percentage. Census method of tools used to collect data. The collected data were analyzed to get a better understanding of the socio economic status of Dalit Christians in Thirunelveli district.

Table 1- Personal Details

Table: 1 Personal detail of the respondents

S. No	Characteristics	Particulars	Total No of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Age	0 to 20	322	25.31
		21 to 40	532	41.94
		Above 60	415	32.75
2.	Residence	Rural	603	47.51
		Urban	379	29.86
		Semi - Urban	287	22.63
3.	Type of family	Joint	1062	83.68
		Nuclear	207	16.32
4.	Marital status	Married	727	57.29
		Unmarried	542	42.71
5.	Annual Income in Rs:	Below 4000	344	27.13
		4000 - 6000	23	1.77
		Above 6000	24	1.84
		Others	879	69.26
		Total sample	1269	100.00

Analysis and Interpretation

Figure: 1 Personal detail of the respondents

From the above table, it is clearly found that 25.31 percent of the respondents belonged to the age group of below 20 years. 41.94 percent belonged to the age group of 30 - 40 years, and were 32.75 percent belonged to the age group of above 60 years.

The respondents were enquired about their Residence 47.51 per cent of the respondents are from rural area, 29.86 Per cent are from Urban area, and 22.63 Per cent are from Sub – Urban area.

The respondents were enquired about their family type, 83.68 per cent respondents are reported that, they are from nuclear family. 16.32 per cent are from joint family.

The respondents were asked about marital status 57.29 per cent of the respondents are married, 42.71 per cent are unmarried.

The respondents were asked about their monthly income of their family 27.13 per cent are earning money below Rs.4000, 1.77 per cent are earning Rs.4000 – 6000, 1.84 per cent are earning money aboveRs.6000 and 69.26 percent of the respondents are not earning but depend on family earning members.

Table – 2 Education and economic status of Dalit Christians

S.No	Particulars	Characteristics	Total No of Respondents	Percentage
1	Educational Level	+2	53	4.17
		Degree studying	45	3.54
		Degree	59	4.64
		Others	1112	87.65
2	Employment status	Daily cooly	266	20.96
		Christian Institutional Teacher	1	0.07
		Govt. Staff	3	0.23
		Govt. Teacher	5	0.39
		Private	21	1.65
		Unemployment	82	6.46
		others	891	70.21
3	Religious Father and Sister	Religious Father	0	0
		Religious Sister	0	0
		Lay People	1269	100.00
4	Willing for to start new Political for Dalit Christians	Willing	1027	80.95
		Unwillingness	104	8.27
		None of the said	136	10.78
		Total sample	1269	100.00

From the above table, it's clearly found educational status 4.17 per cent of the respondents were Higher Secondary studied (+2), 3.54 per cent are studying Degree and Technical Education, 4.64 per cent were completed Degree and Technical Education, and 87.65 per cent were qualified (0 – 10th standard)

The respondent were asked about employment status 20.96 per cent of the respondents are Daily cooly, 0.07 per cent Teacher are working on Christian Institution, 0.23 per cent are working on Government employee, 0.39 per cent teacher working on Government school, 1.65 per cent working on private institution, 70.21 per cent dependents on

family members (Children, Home Maker, Old age)

The respondents were enquired about Religious Father and Religious Sister 0 per cent of the respondents are Religious Father, 0 per cent is Religious Sister and 100 per cent are lay people

The respondent were asked about willing for to start new political party for Dalit Christians 80.95 per cent of the respondents are willing, 8.27 per cent are unwillingness and 10.78 per cent are none of the said

Findings

- ❖ 4.17 per cent of the respondents were Higher Secondary studied (+2)

- ❖ 3.54 per cent are studying Degree and Technical Education
- ❖ 4.64 per cent were completed Degree and Technical Education
- ❖ 87.65 per cent were qualified (0 – 10th standard)
- ❖ 20.96 per cent of the respondents are Daily cooly
- ❖ 0.07 per cent Teacher are working on Christian Institution
- ❖ 0.23 per cent are working on Government employee
- ❖ 0.39 per cent teacher working on Government school
- ❖ 1.65 per cent working on private institution
- ❖ 70.21 per cent dependents on family members (Children, Home Maker, Old age)
- ❖ 0.00 per cent of the respondents are Religious Father
- ❖ 0.00 per cent is Religious Sister
- ❖ 100.00 per cent are lay people
- ❖ 80.95 per cent of the respondents are willing for to start new Political for Dalit Christians

Socio-Economic status of Dalit Christians

Social

The conversion of Dalits into Christianity has no effect on their social or Dalit status. Earlier they were Hindu Dalits, now they are Christian Dalits. There has been no change in their social or economic status. Casteism in Christian community is an enduring reality in areas such as marriage, dining, education and leadership. As in Hinduism, in Christianity too inter-caste marriage and inter-dining between Dalits and non Dalits are strictly prohibited, although very few inter-caste marriages take place out of love affairs among the educated youth. Even at the level of classification, discrimination is practiced against Dalit Christians. The church personnel in their conversations when they want to say anything derogatory or negative about Dalit Christians, Since

Dalit Christians are dependent on non Dalit Christians they do not openly oppose such practices.

Education

A very worrisome place can find discrimination is at educational institutions. “Our children face educational discrimination because we are poor. In Jhansi, there are very good Christian schools. But while children from other castes are able to study there, poor Christian children are thrown out by sixth or seventh grade because we cannot afford fees,” a Dalit Christian complain about. These schools are Christian institutions and the church refuses to take responsibility for this disgraceful form of discrimination. James Massey says, “Take the case of elitist Christian schools. How many Dalit children have been admitted to them so far? These schools cater almost entirely to the ‘upper’ caste elites, Hindus and others. So, in this sense the churches we have are not the church of Christ. Christ tells us to love our neighbours as ourselves. Who are the neighbours of the leaders of the church? Are they the starving Dalits, who may share their Christian faith, or the rich industrialists who are sucking the blood of the poor and who send their children to elitist Christian schools in air-conditioned cars?”

Dalit Christians continue to be discriminated in educational institutions that belong to the church. They have brought out this fact by saying that the church at the most has made them *ayas*, butlers, cooks, drivers, daily cooly and industrial labours. This is confirmed by the fact that a few Dalit Christians have secured any position in professional fields and in bureaucracy like caste Christians.

Economic

A myth is being continued that the Dalits who converted to Christianity are better placed. But a cursory examination of Dalit Christian communities in different parts of India reveals the fact that even after conversion, Dalits remain poor and landless. Conversion could not change this reality. Although the church knows the Indian Government has been denied the constitutional privileges and safeguards for Dalit Christians because they are Christians.

Welfare of Dalit Christians has never been an agenda for church, but a tool for the expansion of the church empire in India. The local church authorities, institutions and organisations have built up and accumulated financial and material resources and continue to get financial aid from donors and agencies all over the world, primarily with the appeal to help the underprivileged and the untouchable Dalits and poor people. But these have not really reached them – not their due share and not even a minimum share. A major reason for this is, Dalit Christians are not in leadership positions in these organisations. At the most, some Dalit Christians would be in maintenance jobs in these institutions. This surmounts to cheating and robbing of Dalit Christians of their right to social mobility within the fold of Christianity.

Most of the well established and premier institutions of the church and centres of higher learning are run under the tag of minority rights. But these institutions offer less opportunities and preferences to Dalit Christians in admissions and appointments. This amounts to an act of betrayal of the constitutional provisions provided to the minority communities. It can be concluded that in this regard, caste Christians act against Dalit Christians very much like the caste Hindus against Dalits, primarily because these institutions are managed by non Dalits. From the above, it becomes apparent that conversion of Dalits to

Christianity does not result in altering their socio-economic conditions. Hence, the demand of Dalit Christians for reservation from the government of India is justified and it is their legitimate right.

Power

Dalit Christians are also discriminated within the church hierarchy. They suffer to get access to power positions. Non Dalit Christians do not want to share power with Dalit Christians from ecclesiastical hierarchy to the administering of Christian institutions, mainly education and health. An obvious example is “Out of 180 Catholic Bishops in India 173 Bishops belong to the upper caste community. Only 7 belong to Dalit community. Out of 21451 Catholic priests, only 1064 are from Dalit community. Out of 65000 Catholic Religious Sister, only 3200 are from Dalit community. While 65% members are from Dalit community, the 35% upper castes Christians...have complete control over the Dalits, the untouchable Christians.”

Among approximately 40,000 Christian educational and health institutions, majority beneficiaries are not from Scheduled Castes or Dalit Christians. In the name of “merit and excellence in education”, these institutions cater and serve to the needs of mainly non Dalits and to a lesser percentage of elite Dalit Christians. This is the same situation that occurs in the Christian hospitals. Only those who can afford to pay for costly treatments are served in these hospitals. These institutions are managed largely by non Dalits and have become institutions for the welfare of the dominant caste and class, while the poorest of the poor are largely neglected.

Thus, Dalit Christians are pushed aside and reduced to insignificance in the church, in spite of being majority. Since the power is in the hands of the non Dalit Christians, they keep Dalit Christians

confined as a segregated group. The lack of Dalit Christian representation in the administrative and consultative bodies means lack of opportunity to present their cause at the decision making level. Thus, the experience of Dalit Christians is one of powerlessness. That's why Dalit Christians feel that the high caste leadership will not secure them their rights until they take leadership into their own hands within the church.

Untouchability Practices

A careful observation of caste practices within the church in India reveals that blatant discrimination like separate sitting arrangements in the place of worship for the Dalits and non Dalits, separate cemeteries continue unabated even today. In some places it is still not possible to worship God together with the high castes. For example, Dalit Christians have to sit separate from high castes in the church, often on the floor. Furthermore, in these churches Dalit Christians have absolutely no liturgical participation whatsoever. They have to participate in the Holy Communion after the high caste Christians drink from the cup. Otherwise, high caste Christians would get polluted. For these reasons there are now a lot of separate churches for Dalit Christians, mostly in rural areas, so that they don't have to be afraid of any discrimination when they want to worship God.

Untouchability is not only practiced among the living, but also among the dead. A wall dividing burial spaces of Dalit and non Dalit Christians in a cemetery, some places in Tamil Nadu. Like Dalits of other faiths, Dalit Christians are also termed as impure, polluted and forced to carry out the filthy jobs namely manual scavenging, sweeping, gutter/swage cleaning, garbage removing, cobbling and cremating the dead bodies as a service to non Dalits. This reality continues even today and Dalit Christians

are forced to undertake the same old polluting jobs.

Rev. Fr. Antony Raj, in his study *Discrimination against Dalit Christians in Tamil Nadu* (1989) lists out the following discriminatory practices which still continue to remain in many churches: "Two chapels are constructed – one for the non Dalits and the other for the Dalits; in some parishes liturgical services are conducted separately; separate seating arrangements are made within the same chapel...Dalits are asked to take seats on the floor; the existence of two separate cemeteries; two separate funeral trucks to carry the dead bodies...Dalits are asked to receive communion only after non Dalits...Dalits are not invited to participate in the washing of feet ceremony during Maundy Thursdays...in cemeteries walls are raised to separate Dalit Christian graves from the upper caste ones."

Discrimination of Dalit Christians in the Society

Dalit Christians are unique in terms of the discrimination they face in the society. High castes Indians treat Dalit Christian as Dalits. For them a Dalit is a Dalit. Christian Dalits are treated even worse than Hindu, Sikh or Buddhist Dalits. In the eyes of high caste people, Dalit Christians made the "mistake" of embracing a foreign religion, in addition to their "crime" of being born in an untouchable caste. The consequence of this is that Dalit Christians are twice discriminated: as Dalits, and as Christians. This becomes clear in the atrocities they have to face as Dalits, but also as Christians. For a great part this has to do with the resentment Indians feel for Christianity as a western religion. This dislike is apparent in the rebukes such as "Why do you come here for help? You go to your pastor?" and "You better go to England or America for help?" So Dalit Christians are treated with greater contempt.

Caste Hindus opposed not only conversions of Dalits, but also their upward socio-economic mobility. Because if the Dalits upgrade their socio-economic status, the caste Hindus will lose workers to do impure jobs and also lose cheap or unpaid labour. Whenever Dalits tried to upgrade their status socially and economically, caste Hindus subjected them to untold atrocities. It is clear from the analysis of the atrocities that the better-off sections or upwardly mobile Dalits have been the target of upper caste atrocities all over the country. For example, Eraiyur, R.N.kandigai, Tatchoor, etc

Discrimination of Dalit Christians by Fellow Dalits of Other Religions

Dalit Hindus also discriminate against Dalit Christians. This is done for several reasons.

- ❖ Dalit Hindus believe or made to believe that Dalit Christians are infidels since they rejected their “original” religion and have embraced a “foreign” religion.
- ❖ Dalit Hindus believe that Dalit Christians receive support from the church and hence, should not be entitled for any provisions made by the government of India for Dalits.
- ❖ Dalits of other faiths fear if reservation is extended to Dalit Christians, their share will decrease.

Discrimination of Dalit Christians by the State

For centuries the Dalit Christians have been carrying the burden of oppression, exploitation and segregation in common with the Dalits of other faiths. But now the Indian government has brought a distinction between one kind of Dalits and another offering one treatment to Dalits who are Hindu, Sikh or Buddhist,

and an entirely different treatment to the Dalits who are Christian or Muslim.

Article 46 gives the rights of educational and economic benefits. Article 17 provides protection from caste related violence and atrocities. Article 15(4) provides reservation for SCs in educational institutions. Articles 330-334 provide reservation of seats in the state legislative assemblies and the Parliament. Articles 16(4), 335 and 320(4) recommended reservation in government services and posts. Social safeguards and protections were earmarked under the Protection of Civil Rights (PCR) Act 1976, The Untouchability (Offences) Act 1955, and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989.

The SCs of Christianity and Islam, by virtue of following religions other than Hinduism, Sikhism or Buddhism, are denied the above Constitutional privileges and rights. The implications of this discrimination are far reaching. The Dalit Christians are deprived of not only reservations, but also protection from atrocities of caste Hindus and caste Christians.

The argument for denying Constitutional rights and privileges, which are extended to Dalits of Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism, to Dalit Christians is that Christianity is an egalitarian religion and does not believe in caste. But Sikhism and Buddhism are also egalitarian religions and do not believe in caste. What is ignored in the argument of the government is, there exists in each religion a wide gap between belief and practices. Christianity, like Sikhism and Buddhism, has no caste, but Christians have caste. It is well known by now that a change of religion does not change caste status. No religion in India is free of casteism, irrespective of its egalitarian ideology or theology. Therefore, it is necessary that caste-based (SC) reservations are delinked from religion.

The government of India has been discriminating against Dalit Christians on the basis of religion, ignoring the undisputed evidences of their social, educational and economic backwardness which naturally qualify them for state protection and statutory rights. Due to this many Dalit Christians are forced to maintain dual identity because of their socio-economic status: “Dalit Hindu” identity in their official records in order to get the Constitutional benefits of reservation, and “Christian” identity in the society and church in order to retain their social status. Despite the Official abolition of discrimination based on caste and religion through laws, the discrimination still continues, and even more so for the Dalit Christians.

Recommendation

1. The Government should provide scholarship and other educational support for Dalit Christians as well as Dalit Hindu students.
2. The Christian minority educational Institution should to give some percentage of seat for Dalit Christians students.
3. The Christian minority educational Institution must to give free cost education for economically most backward Dalit Christian students. Because more than student dropout their education due to economic situation.
4. To encourage higher education, particularly technical and professional education among Dalit Christians, the Diocesan and Religious Congregations should jointly create a scholarship Fund as an encouragement deserving students
5. The Christian minority educational Institution and social worker should to give more awareness for Dalit Christian for an Importance of the education.

Weekly once and summer period will conduct special lecture on English communication skills and Personality development course etc as well as religious education for their development.

6. Central and state Government should provide employment opportunities and other rights as well as Dalit Hindu.
7. Diocesan and congregations should encourage Dalit youth for Religious spiritual service and guide become a good clergy.
8. More than people like to start new political party (Kachi). It is very useful for convenience your need on central Government and state Government.

Conclusion

Ambedkar said, Christianity has not succeeded in dissolving the feeling of caste from among the converts of Christians. There are Brahmin Christians and non Brahmin Christians. Among non Brahmin Christians, there are, Maratha Christians, Mahar Christians, Mang Christians, Bhangi Christians, Pariah Christians, Mala Christians and Madiga Christians. They would not marry or inter-marry. They are as much caste ridden as the Hindus are.”

Social discrimination and untouchability are still alive within the boundaries of church and Christian organisations. Denial of access to education, power and resources for the Dalit Christians is a reality in the church and its institutions. So the Church and Christian organisation have only increased the misery of Dalit Christians. In the struggle of Dalit Christians for liberation, John Webster says, “The church has proven to be weak, ineffective and often an instrument of caste oppression, even though it is predominantly Dalit in composition.” But the Bible “says everybody is equal in the name of Jesus

Christ,” but the church doesn’t live up to this standard of equality.

The “original” sin of the denial of Constitutional privileges, rights and safeguards for Dalit Christians was committed by the Christian leaders nominated to the Constituent Assembly which debated the issue. They all belonged to the elitist upper caste and never experienced or understood the sufferings of the Dalits. They were not prepared to accept the caste discrimination within the church. Hence they did not press for the inclusion of the Christian Dalits in the SCs list. Though the present day non Dalit leadership of the church supports the struggle of Dalit Christians against the state for their Constitutional rights, the same leadership is not adequately in favour of addressing the issue of casteism within the church.

“Once affirmative action is based on caste, then caste becomes a tool,” Malhotra says. Extending the reservation system to non-Hindus “will perpetuate the caste system against them even worse.” The Central government’s immediate reply to the case pending in the Supreme Court in the Dalit Christian/ Muslim reservation issue. The denial of SC status for Dalit Christians is clear case of denying the religious freedom for them and thus a stark violation of constitutional rights of Dalit Christians and Dalit Muslims.

The problems of Dalit Christians cannot be solved by mere theological reflections. The clergy should also try to bring social awareness among the congregation members. Because they are usually prefer prayer to social awareness, and thus go to a point in changing personal behaviour, but not in structural and institutional matters. As a result church becomes ineffective, at certain point, in initiating the process of social transformation.

In order to bring this social transformation, Dalit Christians should be proactive. Here Ambedkar’s pronouncement is very much relevant: “Educate, Agitate and Organise”. In his book “Religion and Dalit Liberation”, John Webster describes four strategies for freedom: 1. Acquisition of political power; 2. Economic independence; 3. Internal social reform; 4. Religious change.

The Dalit Christians challenge Indian church and Christian organisations, their theological insights, caste based hierarchy, their self-centered mission of serving the concerns and interests of mostly non Dalits. Church and Christian organisations have to rethink and re-strategise their vision and mission for Dalit Christians Development. Since most of the Dalit Christians are illiterate and poor, church and Christian organisations, with their pastoral care, have to concentrate on providing educational and economic assistance.

Pope Benedict calls for a “new humanism” to overcome violence: Achieving “True and lasting peace is unimaginable without the development of each person and of all peoples,” Pope Benedict asserted. Yet, is it inconceivable “to think of reducing arms if first we do not eliminate violence at its roots, if man does not first turn decisively to searching for peace and for what is good and just”.

“Nonetheless”, the Pope acknowledges, “it will be difficult to find a solution to the various technical problems without man’s conversion to good on a cultural, moral and spiritual level”. “The future of humanity depends upon a commitment on everyone’s part. Only by pursuing an integrated humanism of solidarity, in which disarmament assumes an ethical and spiritual dimension, can humanity progress towards the true and lasting peace for which it longs,” the Pope concluded.

The message of this new Note is clear and simple: “the Church as a whole and all her Pastors, like Christ, must set out to lead people out of the desert, towards the place of life, towards friendship with the Son of God, towards the One who gives us life, and life in abundance”

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