

# Jesus is a Dalit

\*Mr. S. Yesu Suresh Raj, & \*\* Dr. R. Mani

Research Scholar. & Associate Professor,  
Department of Gandhian Thought and Peaces Science,  
Gandhigram Rural Institute- Deemed University,  
Gandhigram – 624 302, Dindigul. Tamil Nadu, India

## Abstract

*In this world all know about the Jesus Christ and his life of history. Even I am also one of the believer and follower of Christianity. In all Christians faith everything created by God. Therefore Mahatma Gandhi (father of nation) was said we are children of God. But unfortunately the based on the economic condition was divided into different corps specified rich and poor people in our society. The poor people day by day faced many problems in our society and their living with difficult situations. This situation was not only in India, maybe around the World. Even we are see through Jesus life in the Bible mentioned many places Jesus was helped the poor, oppressed and help less people. As a researcher believer and follower asked many questions myself, why Jesus was helped to poor and help less people. Some people point of view Jesus also one of God but the researcher vision Jesus is a Dalit, because, I have here one example, suppose your suffering some diseases and unhappy*

*life etc., at the time who is helped to you, who is take care of your health. Here I strongly say that first your family member then may be your relatives. This is really applicable to Jesus life also. Hence, the researcher determined Jesus is a Dalit.*

**Keywords:** Christian, Dalit, Society, poor, oppressed, helpless people, Social Perspective

## Introduction:

I am asked many question about Christians (Jesus), why Jesus was saved oppressed people and lived with untouchable (sin) people. He was against fighter with Jews and Parchi for Dalit liberation (vulnerable). Why Jesus was helped poor, above my question few author gave wonderful answer that is Jesus is a Dalit, this answer collected from different author below I give the reference. This article short formed of those books. The caste system in India is much intertwined with the Indian culture which is virtually impossible to escape from it. So, the Dalit Christians in India are still downtrodden, still living as Dalits. The oppression and discrimination has not stopped even when converting to another religion, although many converts still hope so. The fact is that caste follows you

wherever you go, even into the Church, purely because the caste system is fixed in the minds of the Indian people. This article describes Jesus as a Dalit, Jesus Christ was always with the poor people. Jesus was a role model for freedom and in his life period he helped, served and advised the Dalit and others people. "In Him the distinctions between Jew and Gentile, slave and free man, male and female, disappear; you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28) Jesus reached out and touched the untouchable when He healed the leper and when He acknowledged and welcomed the faith touch of the woman with the issue of blood. Jesus criticized the proud priest and praised the despised Samaritan who gave of himself to help the man who'd been robbed (Luke 10:25-37) Being a Christian means that you leave your Hindu caste-status behind and move on to follow Christ, into a faith where everyone is equal in the sight of God

### **Dalit:**

The term *Dalit* has its root in Sanskrit (Dall) which means broken, cracked, trodden down, scattered, crushed or destroyed. It is interesting to note that the Hebrew verb 'dal' also means the frail one or the weak one which denotes the poor and lowly of the society. (Gutierrez, 1973:291) The term was first used by Jyotirao Phule (1827-1890), a backward class social reformer, to describe the untouchables and outcastes of India as the oppressed and broken victims of the Hindu society. The term is a constant reminder of their age-old oppression and deprivation. It does not actually mean poor or outcaste but, as . Kuruvila points out, it is a state to which a certain section of the people have been reduced through systematic religious

process and are forced to live continually in that predicament. Mahatma Gandhi called them Harijans (people of God) but the untouchables considered it a misnomer because it did not signify their real status. They are not treated even as human beings leave alone being respected as people of God.

### **Dalit Christians**

Dalit Christians form a vast majority of the Christian body within India. Conversion started from the Portuguese Padroado, the English Christian merchants, the French and the Irish missionaries and others converted thousands of Dalits to the faith. It must be noted that economic benefits also played a major role in these conversions. For the Dalits who lived in extreme poverty, the economic benefits were the much needed and unexpected blessings. Many of them were labelled as 'wheat Christians' or 'milk powder Christians' but in truth hundreds of Dalits escaped starvation solely due to the humanitarian efforts of the missionaries. But it is also true that many of the missionaries were instrumental in maintaining the caste system in the Indian church. Just a casual look at the history of the Indian church reveals how the missionaries tolerated and accepted caste horrors of the caste system. But there it was, taking deep roots in the life and practice of the church. The missionaries found themselves having to make compromises in order to escape the wrath of the upper caste converts. The equality and the human dignity promised by Christianity has remained only a dream in the case of the millions of Dalit Christians.

## Jesus is a Dalit Christian

The Dalit is the one who is born in a hut. Poor persons only give birth on that place. The writer describes his Christian faith experience in this article. He sees Christ not decorated up in silken robes wearing a golden crown, as he is depicted in the cathedrals and Churches, but as the child of a poor village woman, the wife of a carpenter. Virgin Mary was so poor that the only place she could find to deliver her child was a manger, where cows and horses are tied up. It is a different matter that today people have tried to distort this image by constructing fancy mangers in palatial Churches to depict Jesus' birth during Christmas celebrations. When Jesus was born, the only thing that Mary could offer at the Synagogue was a pair of doves, while the general practice was to offer a lamb. Why Jesus Christ took care of poor people? For example, Jesus touched a leper, he doesn't become polluted, but the leprosy patient was healed and when a menstruating woman touched Jesus, Jesus didn't get polluted but the woman was healed. When Jesus touched a dead body, he did not become polluted but the dead body was raised to life. And the good news is that Jesus gives this power to his disciples, to go and heal and preach

Everybody not is a sinner. Yes, in one sense everybody is a sinner, but there are two types: one who sin and one who is sinned against. But Jesus didn't make any difference. He did make difference between who sinned and who was sinned against. But they both need Jesus. But in different ways. Let me tell you this story to assert this point. Jesus was having supper with a man called Simon, a house of a Pharisee. And a woman came and washed

his feet with her tears. And the Pharisees said that if this man was a prophet he would have known what kind of woman this is who was touching him. And Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, that he said to the host of the house: do you see this woman who is crying and weeping and washing my feet? And I came to your house and you offered me no kiss of welcome, but she has kissed my feet. You did not offer to wash my feet, but she has washed them with her tears. Now this woman is also a sinner, but she is sinned against, and Jesus supports her. That man, the Pharisee, is also a sinner, but he probably thinks he is not. So there are two types. But in the very beginning, before we make the choice of victimizing another or not, do you share the conviction that when we were born, we were born in sin? You are touching the concept of original sin. Whether we are born sinners. "Jesus in his ministry totally identified himself with the Dalits of his time. The dominant religious leaders of his days accused him of eating and drinking with publicans, tax collectors and sinners (MK. 2:15-16). Jesus' attitude toward the people and the society considered as outcasts (The Samaritans and women of his society could fit into this category), his mixing with them freely, his table fellowship with them demonstrated powerfully that he loved and cared for them - the Dalits. He showed them that he was one with them. He assured privileged places for them in the Kingdom of God - a new social order he came to earth to establish" (Mt. 21 : 3 1-3 2).

St. Augustin would say: we sin, we don't become sinners because we sin, but we sin because we are sinners. The problem with that is that for the Dalits we

have been told that for 4000 years that we were born sinners and you are polluted. You were born sinners because in the previous birth you were sinners. And if you suffer now, next birth may be better. This is a very convenient way to keep people enslaved. So to accept that framework is very difficult. Traditionally the Churches have held that view and it is probably to tell the oppressor that he too is a sinner, it is a good thing. The emphasis should not be on the view that they are sinners. They are basically good people, Gods forgiveness is there. God overlooks the sins. You can't tell a person who is a victim of the sins of others that you are a sinner. You are an important person in the eyes of God. .

(Another aspect which will make sense to the Dalits is the understanding of Jesus as the servant God. He is not an upper caste landlord who forces other people to work for him. He is a God who serves, who does all the menial jobs, and who washes the feet of others Qn 13:1-17) The image of Christ the King (a triumphant King and Lord) has, in my judgment proved to be counter cultural in the case of Dalits. King and Lord are terms always associated (at least in their minds) with power, domination and oppression. They are already slaves to their landlords and moneylenders. They do not need a God to enslave them again. Seeing Jesus as the suffering servant of God will be a perfect identification with the Dalit community as a serving community that receives only insults and injuries as a reward for its services. But their sufferings and pains will turn into joy when justice is established in the society. The suffering and cross of Christ becomes meaningful only in relation to the liberation and

salvation he accomplished through them. This makes it possible for the Dalits to find meaning and value for their sufferings. Dalits will obviously be attracted to Jesus who is poor. He owned no properties, no house, no land, no wealth - nothing that he could call his own. He was a poor carpenter who went about as an itinerant preacher. A Dalit would feel very close to this Jesus because he himself owns nothing. Yet when he thinks of what this poor carpenter's son from Galilee has achieved - the transformations that he has brought about in societies the lives that he has touched and changed, the millions of disciples that walk.... in his ways the Dalit will be challenged to break the shackles of his inferiority and plunge whole heartedly into the task of transforming the society that keeps him bound and enslaved. Poverty also meant for Jesus that he was totally dependent on the Father. Dalit community is also a dependent community. They have to depend on the others for their survival and growth. Whereas Jesus' dependency was one that he chose voluntarily the dependence of Dalits is forced on them. The dependence of Jesus on God is founded on love whereas the Dalits cannot love those people who keep them under their thumbs.

Jesus' Dalitness is symbolized at its best on the cross. It is on the cross that we see him as the broken one, the one crushed, rejected, cast out of the city - a true Dalit. He hangs on the cross exposing the highest measure of dehumanization. The cross is also the price he had to pay for his identification with the Dalits - his solidarity with the poor and the outcasts and his confrontation with the powerful that oppress them Here I think, the Dalits could be motivated for social change. They

should be made to realize that their misery and injustice is not God given - it is manmade - and it can and must be changed. We can show Jesus as the one who fought to bring down the unjust social structure. Just as Jesus had to take up the cross and die in the process of establishing social justice.

Many Dalit Theologians would identify the cry of Jesus on the cross, "My God, My God why have you forsaken me" (Mt.27: 46-47) as one of the most authentic Dalit experiences. The experience of God-forsakenness is a common and inevitable feeling of the Dalits. Sometimes God seems to be so far away - he doesn't seem to care. One can meaningfully convey to the Dalits that Jesus has experienced this authentically Dalit emptiness. Just as the people mocked and ridicule Jesus the Dalits may become a laughing stock or an abomination in the eyes of the public. But Jesus tells them that even at the thick of the God forsakenness he was certain that God would vindicate him and help him achieve his mission. The same compassionate God (though the Dalits cannot see the compassion many times - they feel they suffer alone) will certainly vindicate the Dalit community.

One example: through Christ God showed on whose side he was. Which is obvious, God was on the side of those who are broken. But in Christ the uniqueness is that the solidarity with the Dalits was in its fullness. That he allowed himself to be broken, his body to be broken, in suffering, even to the extent that Jesus felt alienated from God, from society, from his own people. We see the experience of rejection in Christ. But Christ suffering among us is very appealing: dying with us,

suffering with us. So he died with you and not for you? Yes. There are two things here, the first thing is, what is unacceptable to us is that Jesus died because of us. That we are the cause of Jesus death. We are not the cause, the oppressors are the cause of his death.

According to James Massey, three elements play an important role in Dalit theology: 'the aspiration of Dalits for fuller liberation, the recognition that God is on the side of the Dalits and the conviction that Christ is the model for the struggle, a struggle which continues even today through the Holy Spirit.' Solidarity is also a very important feature of Dalit theology. James Massey recognises a two-sided solidarity: first, in history God has shown his own solidarity with human beings, second, being in solidarity with Dalits of other faiths and ideologies. But this solidarity can also be seen in another role of Dalit theology, namely, creating awareness among non-Dalits of Dalit suffering and pain. "The Church in India should know that millions of Dalits in general, and about 2.5 million Dalit Christians, are still waiting to receive the whole of salvation, because so far they have only been offered the half of salvation which speaks of 'saving their souls'"

Monodeep Daniel, when he said: "We see the experience of rejection in Christ. So, the Dalit experience of alienation, of rejection, we see in Christ. For instance, for us, to see the death of Christ and relate it to us as an idea of substitution is very difficult for us. I mean we don't need anybody to die for us. We all die every day. How does the death of Christ substitute our killings every day? It



doesn't. It does not relate to us. But solidarity does. Solidarity is salvation for us." Hence, Jesus suffers alongside the Dalits and not specifically for them. This is further explained by James Massey: "Now, Jesus, who was born in a desperately poor family, spent the whole of his life working for the liberation of the poor and the oppressed. That is why for me, as a Christian, it is a natural expression of my faith commitment to be involved in the movement for Dalit liberation, because Jesus, the person in whom I have put my faith, became for me what I am today—Dalit, oppressed and despised, in order that I and millions of others like me could be liberated. But if Jesus is my source of inspiration, people from other faiths may have their own sources from which they draw their strength, and that is fine by me." In this way, Jesus is an example to follow, just as Ambedkar was. Another important characteristic of Dalit theology is interesting here, also formulated by James Massey: "Western Christian theology is based on the classical Greek dualism between this- world and the other-world, between matter and spirit. In contrast, Dalit theology is deeply rooted in this world, in this-worldly experiences and sufferings of the Dalits, and, rather than promising the Dalits a place in heaven, it inspires them to struggle for transforming this world to bring justice for the Dalits. " He then continues: "If at all dialogue has any meaning for us Dalits, you have to tell us how much your faith can contribute in improving the lives of the millions of our people who are living in conditions worse than slavery. If religion cannot do so, then of what use is it? So, for us religion has

worth only if it helps us in our struggle for liberation."

## CONCLUSION:

Dalit dream is equality and justice. The risen Jesus is still with them encouraging them and strengthening them to continue their fight against injustice and oppression. The problem of the Dalit Christians is indeed a real and serious problem of the Indian Church. It is an issue that demands the immediate attention of the church leadership. They can no longer sit back and tell the world that there is no caste distinction or discrimination in the church. Indian church needs to take bold initiatives in order to liberate the Dalit Christians from their oppression. The injustices and inequalities within the church must first be rooted out if the church needs to challenge the caste - ridden Indian society to change and become more human. Pastors and ministers should involve themselves in the transformation of the society and commit themselves to the task of liberating the innocent victims of an inhuman and unjust social system.

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