

# DALIT LIBERATION SUNDAY

Theme :  
"Administer Justice Daily!  
Deliver the Oppressed!" (Jeremiah 21:12)

November 13, 2016



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN INDIA  
Commission on Dalits and Tribals / Adivasis

**Respected Ecumenical Colleagues,**

Warm greetings from National Council of Churches in India!

Dalit Liberation Sunday has become an important feature in the calendar of Indian Churches and Ecumenical movements. Over the years, there has been a positive response in sensitizing the local congregations towards concerns of Dalits, for no longer caste issue is visualized as a sociological issue or an issue outside the purview of church but more seen as an issue challenging the core of our faith and gospel.

The theme for this year's Dalit Liberation Sunday is "*Administer Justice Daily! Deliver the Oppressed!*" (Jeremiah 21:12). We take this opportunity to invite you to observe Dalit Liberation Sunday on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2016 in your church/local parish/institution in a creative way and rededicate your commitment to the Gospel by accompanying the unaccompanied. However, if you already have some programme on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2016, you may think of celebrating this Special day on a later Sunday i.e. on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2016. Herewith we are sending you hard copies of posters and a special order of worship for the day. You may take the freedom to use the entire worship order and translate it in your vernacular language or adapt parts of it.

We would appreciate if you send a brief report along with a few photographs of the observance to the undersigned. Let us join to observe Dalit Liberation Sunday on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2016.

Thanking you in anticipation.

With regards,

In Christ,



**Pradip Bansrior**

*Executive Secretary*

Commission on Dalits and Tribals/ Adivasis

National Council of Churches in India

## FOREWORD

Writing in *India Today* on February 3, 2016 Ajit Kumar Jha cries out, “The Dalits, Still Untouchable!” He asserts, “The Dalit dilemma in India reads like an entire data sheet of tragedies. According to a 2010 report by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on the Prevention of Atrocities against Scheduled Castes, a crime is committed against a Dalit every 18 minutes. Every day, on average, three Dalit women are raped, two Dalits murdered, and two Dalit houses burnt. According to the NHRC statistics put together by K.B. Saxena, a former additional chief secretary of Bihar, 37 per cent Dalits live below the poverty line, 54 per cent are undernourished, 83 per 1,000 children born in a Dalit household die before their first birthday, 12 per cent before their fifth birthday, and 45 per cent remain illiterate. . . they are denied access to water sources in 48 per cent of our villages because untouchability remains a stark reality even though it was abolished in 1955.

We may be a democratic republic, but justice, equality, liberty and fraternity-the four basic tenets promised in the Preamble of our Constitution-are clearly not available to all. Dalits continue to be oppressed and discriminated against in villages, in educational institutions, in the job market, and on the political battlefield, leaving them with little respite in any sphere or at any juncture of their lives.”<sup>1</sup>

Citing the incidents of caste violence in Kilvenmani, Villupuram, Tsundur, Dharmapuri, Bathani Tola and Laxmanpur Bathe, Meena Kandasamy, writer and activist, questioning the pattern of acquittals in cases of caste massacres and atrocities on Dalits, says, “The judgments were as merciless as the massacres themselves. There is a large element of victim blaming, dismissing the evidence of witnesses and denial of the caste element, denial of the case element and reducing the entire case into compensation as if Dalit lives can be purchased. *Systematic denial of justice to Dalits is genocidal hate.*”<sup>2</sup>

Such a situation would make Jeremiah scream, “Administer Justice Daily! Deliver the Oppressed!” Since caste discrimination, injustice and violence have become daily affairs our hearts have become callous. At times a Rohith Vemula type suicide or a Una type episode rouses us from our social slumber, we become emotional and decry the system and its injustices, but then we go back to our slumber! Perhaps Slumber is too mild a word. We too are guilty of silently endorsing dalit injustice and violence or are also involved in such practices ourselves. Therefore the NCCI has been pleading with and exhorting Christians, “You cannot serve Christ and Caste!” hence the exhortation of Jeremiah: Administer justice every morning! Deliver the oppressed from the power of the oppressor!”

May the liturgy of Dalit Liberation Sunday move us to practising justice, and the deliverance of Dalits!

**Rev. Dr. Roger Gaikwad**

*General Secretary*

National Council of Churches in India

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<sup>1</sup><http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/dalits-untouchable-rohith-vemula-caste-discrimination/1/587100.html>

<sup>2</sup>The Hindu, Mumbai, November 1, 2015,

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/mumbai/systematic-denial-of-justice-to-dalits-is-genocidal-hate/article7827578.ece>

## INTRODUCTION

Oppression can be carried out in various and diverse ways, oppressive structures can be numerous and communities affected by oppression can be many. This is true for Indian social order where many oppressed communities are the victims of divergent oppressive systems. Dalits have their own historical experience of oppression and future aspirations. The oppressive dynamics and discriminating tendencies that affect Dalit communities have to be explored and exposed because the majority of its membership in many of our churches comes from Dalit population. The mission of Churches is not only limited to exploring and exposing discriminative tendencies, but also finding ways through which discriminated communities are built up and transformed.

Recent incidents of violence and heinous attacks on Dalits by the “Gau Rakshak Samiti” in Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and especially in Una, Gujarat in which cow vigilante group members publicly flogged a Dalit family and brutally beat up seven Dalit men for allegedly skinning a dead cow leading almost 24 dalits to attempt ending their lives, are vicious expressions of the violation of their human rights.

On the part of the Central Government, there has been a conscious delay in ensuring justice to Dalit Christians and Dalit Muslims, they are not yet granted Scheduled Caste status. Despite the recommendations from the Mondal Commission and Justice Ranganath Mishra's Commission, which pronounced to delink religion from scheduled caste status, the government is delaying to act on it. Christians and Muslims from Dalit origin have been waiting for justice for the last sixty eight years.

In the context where our Dalit brothers and sisters undergo experiences of violence, death, dehumanization and denial of basic

human rights, the birth of Jesus gives a wakeup call to the oppressing communities, to liberate their minds from the ideologies of discrimination, domination, exploitation and oppression. The theme for this year's Dalit Liberation Sunday is "*Administer Justice Daily! Deliver the Oppressed!*" (Jeremiah 21:12). It reiterates the concern about the delay in ensuring justice to Dalits in India. The theme calls for affirmative action all across India to sensitize the Churches about the struggles of Dalits and to exhort the local congregations to rise up to the occasion and strive for Justice.

**Pradip Bansrior**

*Executive Secretary*

Commission on Dalits and Tribals/ Adivasis  
National Council of Churches in India



## ORDER OF WORSHIP

**Theme: "Administer Justice Daily! Deliver the Oppressed!"**  
*(Jeremiah 21:12)*

### **The Preparation:**

- ▮ The worship place may be decorated with the tools that Dalit use for their livelihood
- ▮ Before the service, the congregation may organize a short community procession singing some regional songs or some common hymn accompanied with Parai, Thavil, Mridagam, Mrudang or Drum.
- ▮ The youth from Dalit community may welcome the congregation by applying blue colour powder (Gulal/ Abir) on the forehead symbolising dalitness.
- ▮ Feet washing may be arranged before the service. (Jesus Christ is willing to humbly and unconditionally serve His followers in a lowly human task, as an example and sign of following and be willing to perform even the most unpleasant tasks for their brethren and humankind)

### **Invocation:**

**Leader:** Holy Spirit, God the giver of life: At the beginning of time you gave every living thing the breath of life.

**All:** Come, Creator Spirit, and renew your whole creation.

**Leader:** Holy Spirit, Spirit of unity, reconcile your people. Give us wisdom. Give us grace. Give us a vision of your breadth and length and height to challenge our stubbornness and bring us humbly together.

**All:** Come, Holy Spirit, reconcile us.

**L:** Holy Spirit, Spirit of peace: You break down barriers of language, caste, race and culture, and heal the divisions that separate us.  
**All:** Come, reconciling Spirit, and unite us all in the love of Christ.

**Leader:** Holy Spirit, Spirit of Justice: Deliver us from oppression, from discrimination and from injustice. Give us the strength to treat other with love and kindness.

**All:** Come, Holy Spirit, restore justice.

**Leader:** Holy Spirit, transform us and sanctify us as we take up our cross in your name. Give us the gifts we need to be your servants in spirit and truth.

**All:** Come, Holy Spirit. Come into us.

**Opening Prayer:**

**Leader:** God of Justice, the liberator, who breaks the wall of oppression and slavery, who seeks equality and love among all human kind, and in whom all beings exist and are sustained, speak to us afresh through this worship, renew our strength, help us to rededicate ourselves to administer justice daily, to deliver the oppressed from violence, discrimination and unjust human acts.  
**Amen.**

**Hymn:**

**O God, You Call for Justice ("The Church's One Foundation")**

1. O God, you call for justice for goodness, never greed!  
You seek a world of fairness where all have what they need-  
Where all have food and water and homes in which to thrive,  
Where all have hope and laughter and joy to be alive!
2. O God, you call for kindness instead of keeping score;  
You seek a world that welcomes the hungry and the poor.



Lord, where there is injustice may we work to protect  
The struggling ones, the voiceless that others would reject.

3. You call us to walk humbly, for we are not our own;  
We all are poor and needy; we need the grace you've shown.  
May we respond to others reflecting what you give-  
Compassion, kindness, justice - so all may gladly live.
4. O God, may our great nation seek justice, as we should,  
and work with dedication to seek the common good.  
We're blessed to be a blessing; may we within our law  
Seek justice and compassion that reaches out to all.

**Reflection:**

**Female Voice:** The men said “you ate cow meat and that is why you are being disgraced [raped].” They even threatened to kill us and our family if we disclosed this to anyone, said victims of a gang rape who were 20-year-old and 14-year-old, who were sexually assaulted by several men in their home in Mewat, Haryana, on the August 24, 2016. The scenario of India is changing and rape has become a common phenomenon that happens to every woman who doesn't abide to rules and regulations of the upper caste men. This incident further stresses and tells the heightening of Hindu fundamentalism and fanaticism that has grown in a country which labels itself as “equal, secular and egalitarian” putting the life of Dalits, women and religious minorities at stake. It also indicates how power intrudes into caste and patriarchy silencing the voices of the underprivileged.

**Male Voice:** The theme, “Administer Justice Daily! Deliver the Oppressed!” also is one among the voices of the people who yearn for justice yet undergo discrimination and injustice as part of their daily routine. This theme comes as a reminder and as a serious thought to us to ponder over as we observe Dalit Liberation Sunday this year amidst growing injustice from the government, fundamentalist

groups, and people from dominant castes. Jeremiah's exhortation in Chapter 21:12 to administer justice and deliver the oppressed is the oracle against the kings of Judah, in general. Zedekiah, King of Judah, being explicitly mentioned in chapter 21:1-10 has set the stage for these series of oracles against the royalty of Judah. Till this point, those held responsible for the coming destruction were the deceitful prophets and priests and the people who sought protection and assistance from foreign nations rather than from God. Now the focus shifts to the kings because they have failed to discharge their duty of protecting the weak and powerless.

**Female Voice:** The Hebrew word for justice 'mish-pät' in the present oracle, refers to just and balanced action by the royal house in conformity with what is legally and morally right, ultimately defined by stipulations of the Sinai covenant. Administering justice every morning is not just about when or how often to do it or about rendering as quickly as possible but it is also to emphasize that we are called to do right and just action and see to it that justice is done. In the text, God seems to give a chance for Judah's leadership to repent, and change their ways to administer justice every morning and deliver persons, who have been robbed, from the power of the oppressor, failing which will bring the wrath, i.e. the fire of God. The aftermath of fire and wrath of God shows that God prioritizes this issue and that justice is the expected action of every person.

**Male Voice:** The prophet's address to the kings, the leaders of the nation, to administer justice daily and deliver the oppressed is also an admonition to the present leaders and the church, as the body. We are expected to execute justice because God does justice and it is part of our legal responsibility to live as God's creation. The text clearly speaks about the responsibility of the kings which was seldom fulfilled. Even today, we have laws that state that we are equal and secular in state. However, in reality, we have not experienced equality

but only religious fundamentalism, fanaticism, patriarchy, leadership abuse and so on. It seems to become casual to hear more and more of the injustices that are done to the poor, Dalits, women and all of the sections in the margins. Jeremiah's speech is not just words that were told to the kings then, but it is a call to the present leaders, the people and the church to plunge into action, into a pro-active involvement to administer justice as leaders in our own possibilities. As church, the body of Christ, it is our responsibility to ensure that justice is established as a daily part of life. The present atrocities against Dalits and religious minorities should shake us, the church, to raise our prophetic voice and act swiftly according to the need of the hour. The Dalit identity and consciousness should constantly be a driving force to live the Nazareth Manifesto which Christ envisioned. Christ is also part of this identity and consciousness bringing good news to this world entrusting us with this responsibility. May God, the one who administers justice, Christ who shares our identity and the Holy Spirit who engraves our heart and mind to share the pain of our fellow beings, be with us and continue to shake and disturb us. **Amen**

**Enactment:**

Any real-life incident/issue that oppressed some Dalits or discriminated against them could be shared as an enactment before the sermon.

**Scripture Reading:** *Deuteronomy 24:17-18*  
*Jeremiah 22:3*  
*Luke 4:18-19*  
*James 2:14-17*

**Sermon:**

A sermon may be preached using one or more texts suggested above or any other suitable texts.

### **Confession on Sin and Absolution:**

**Priest:** “If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9)”. Let us examine ourselves, and with penitent hearts, let us confess sincerely  
*(Keep moments of silence)*

**All:** God who administers Justice, who delivers the oppressed and who desires humans to continue this mission, we repent before you for we have failed to administer Justice and to deliver the oppressed. We confess that many a times we have considered our Dalit brothers and sisters as inferior beings, and failed to consider them as our co-equals. We are sorry for we have stood silent, as mute witnesses to injustice and abuse of the rights and dignity of Dalits around us. We have named your name but have not departed from practicing inequality. Forgive us our complacency, our silence, our reluctance and our inaction. Forgive us, and may our Dalit brothers and sisters forgive and pardon us too.

**Priest:** May the forgiving God pardon our sin. May our Dalit brothers and sisters forgive us. May the God of all righteousness give us strength and wisdom to administer Justice daily and be an agent to deliver the oppressed.

**All:** God of everyone, we confess that as Dalits we ourselves have degraded our abilities and have allowed ourselves to be humiliated. We have failed to stand up for our own rights, we have failed to say no when we ought to have done so, we have considered ourselves inferior beings and have failed to embrace the beauty in us. We pray you will mould us to be brave and bold to say no to unjust act, to find strength in ourselves and move forwards with confidence and deliver ourselves from oppression.

**Priest:** May the God who empowered Israelites, empower you and forgive your sins through Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

**Affirmation of Faith** (*Congregation may stand for the affirmation of faith*)

**Leader:** Let us affirm our faith together

**All:** We believe in God,  
who created everything with uniqueness and beauty and  
who ordained all as equals,  
who lives among us, who struggles along with us in our  
daily living for justice and peace.  
We believe in Jesus Christ,  
who values persons over systems, who affirms the value of  
persons over things  
who rejects any custom or system that marginalizes people,  
who associates, and shares table with the poor without any  
discrimination,  
who administers and advocates equality and justice,  
who delivers the powerless and reforms society.  
We believe in the Holy Spirit,  
who is working among us to bring peace, justice and  
reconciliation to the whole cosmos.  
We believe in one universal Church and one baptism and  
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins and the  
world to come.

*(The congregation may sit)*

**Intercession:**

**Leader:** 'Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers  
and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying  
for all the Lord's people', (Eph. 6:18). Let us intercede with God.

**Voice 1:** God of equality, we pray for all our Dalit brothers and sisters  
who are constantly discriminated in the work place and in the  
provision of services, who are not paid what they deserve, who are  
not employed according to their potentiality and ability because they  
are Dalit.

**All:** We pray, O God, for the eradication of such inequality and discrimination. We pray, O God, liberate them from bondages.

**Voice 2:** God of love, we pray for our Dalit brothers and sisters who are forbidden to marry outside their caste. They are rejected on the basis of their caste. Some have even lost their life because of inter caste marriage within and outside the church.

**All:** We pray for a heart that embraces, values and loves everyone equally with human dignity.

**Voice 3:** God of Justice, we pray for our Dalit students who are deprived of education, who are not allowed to sit and learn with other children, who are constantly harassed inside the schools, colleges and universities, some of whom have even committed suicide protesting such injustice.

**All:** We pray O God, teach us to accept and love one another as you have accepted and loved us. Help us to be sensitive towards Dalit students in their constant fight for justice.

**Voice 4:** God the provider, we pray for our Dalit farmers who are oppressed by landlords, whose debts have no end besides their continuous hard labour, who are despised and looked down upon, who are compelled to commit suicide because of their unjust economic status.

**All:** O God, help us to value the hard work of our Dalit brothers and sisters in producing food. We pray for economic justice in our country especially towards farmers.

**Voice 5:** God of community, we pray for the Churches in India as they continue to fight for the rights and upliftment of Dalit Christian, to bring equality within and outside church. Along with the leaders,



guide us in the right path. As a church help us to facilitate a friendlier and inclusive environment for oppressed people.

**All:** We pray O God, reform the church, help us to be a prophetic voice that will be heard by the society and lead them to root out caste.

**Priest:** God of justice 'let your justice roll down like water and righteousness like ever-flowing streams' (*Amos 5:24*), in our midst. Enable us to be partners with you in this cause, through Jesus Christ, the compassionate and just liberator. **Amen.**

**Closing Hymn:**

*Make me a channel of your peace 'or' any suitable regional song can be sung*

Make me a channel of your peace  
Where there is hatred let me bring your love  
Where there is injury, your pardon Lord  
And where there is doubt true faith in You  
Make me a channel of your peace  
Where there is despair in life let me bring hope  
Where there is darkness only light  
And where there's sadness ever joy  
Oh, Master grant that I may never  
seek So much to be consoled as to  
console To be understood as to  
understand  
To be loved as to love with all my soul  
Make me a channel of your peace  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned  
It is in giving to all man that we receive  
And in dying that we are born to eternal life

**The Lord's Prayer: (*Adapted*)**

Our God, who is ever present in the struggles, pains and sufferings  
of the people,  
Hallowed be your name.  
Your kingdom of Love and Freedom come.  
Your will 'to do justice and righteousness' be done on earth,  
As it is in heaven.  
Give us this day courage to stand for what is right, to demand for  
an equal share of your wealth for all.  
Forgive us our servitude to the status quo, and give us the will to  
become agents of change.  
Lead us not into an attitude of complicity, but deliver us from the  
danger of becoming docile. For to you belongs the power to judge  
and the power to liberate, forever and ever. **Amen.**

**Benediction:**

“Seek justice, voice out against oppression, defend the marginalized  
and become an agent of peace.” May the Creator God who responds to  
the cries of the oppressed, the Compassionate Christ who is  
committed to the reign of God, and the Holy Spirit who equips  
persons to be disciples of Jesus Christ, be with us this day and forever.  
**Amen.**



### **Credits for Order of Worship:**

- 1. Rev. Cand. Chrisida Nithyakalyani** is a PhD Student in the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. She belongs to Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church.
- 2. Ms. Ngalaton Ningsen Hungyo** is currently working as an Intern- Commission on Tribals and Adivasis of National Council of Churches in India. She recently finished her Bachelor of Divinity from the Bishop's College, Kolkata.
- 3. Mr. Jyotirmaya Tandi** is currently working as an Intern - Commission on Dalits of National Council of Churches in India. He recently finished his Bachelor of Divinity from the Bethel Bible College, Guntur.
- 4. NCCI-Secretariat**



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**Commission on Dalits and Tribals / Adivasis**

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