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## EDITORIAL

### **Engaged Spirituality, Edified Christ-communities . . .**

The month of November every year is very important for the National Council of Churches in India. It is the month in which the Dalit Liberation Sunday is observed. It is also the month in which the Churches in India have been requested to observe the Disability Advocacy Sunday. It is in this month that the Global community observes 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, and this activism is earnestly promoted by the NCCI amongst all its constituents. These are not mere annual ritualistic observances in the NCCI calendar, but are occasions of annual retreats for the churches to introspect, improve and become incisive.

The Dalit Liberation Sunday this year focussed on Challenging Caste: Affirming the Dignity of Dalit Women. The rape at Hathras and several other reported and unreported incidents of its kind are reminders that caste does play a crucial role in such contexts and that without addressing caste and working on its annihilation, as well as on patriarchy, its progenitor, such gross and blatant violations are bound to recur. Dalit Liberation Sunday every year is a call to the Churches and the ecumenical community as a whole to look out for instances of the inhuman and sinful practice of caste within its fellowship and in its ministries and to be so consumed by holy indignation as to root it out completely.

Disability Advocacy Sunday this year focussed on helping Churches and the NCCI Constituents to consider disability through the lens of God's design of diversity. This is a challenge indeed to consider persons with disabilities as persons who are just as normal as anyone else to be part of the ministries of the church. The accompanying challenge is to grow into that inclusion where the mind and physical spaces are inclusive of ALL without barriers to any and without discrimination against anyone.

Churches in India have overwhelmingly responded to join the 16 days of Global Activism against Gender Based Violence focussed on 'leaving no one behind'. The many events underway now will culminate on Thursday, the 10th of December - the International

Human Rights Day – by addressing the intersection of gender and caste within the human rights framework.

The articles in this month's NCC Review, akin to the ecumenical observances in November, focus on this 'engaged spirituality' reflected in introspection leading to an inclusive spirituality, inclusion of all, especially of the discriminated and ostracised communities, and being incisive in affirming and nurturing the liberative life-nurturing, lived experiences of all peoples and creation. The events in this country and around the world indicate that the clock is being set back to where it all started. It appears that all is in vain, especially when it comes to those causes that the social movements stood for and on behalf of which they witnessed significant gains. Nevertheless faith and hope driven by love never give in. Advent is a reminder every year of the liberation that comes, and comes, and ever comes. Let it be our prayer that we may be blessed with the discernment needed to embrace that glory which is revealed every day even from such places as the cattle sheds and open farm lands, challenging the spiritualities and economic thought generated by the hegemonies in 'high' places.

**Asir Ebenezer**

*General Secretary, NCCI*



***NCCI Dalit And Tribal/Adivasi concern  
campaign against Caste in Church***

**"No One can serve Christ and Caste"  
Practise of Caste is Sin, and Untouchability Crime**

*Discrimination based on Caste in your Church?*  
write to : **dataconcerns@ncci1914.com**

## **By Faith- Christian, by Law- Hindu, by Experience- Outcaste: Multiple Identities as an imposed marginality, and as a space of resilience for Dalit-Christians**

- Raj Bharath Patta\*

### **Introduction**

Dalit Christians' identity has been layered into several strands in today's socio-political and religious India. The social identity of Dalits of any religion for that matter is critical. From the perspective of other castes, Dalits continue to be Dalits no matter which religion they adhere to. So with conversion from their religion, their caste identity never changes. Dalit Christians, who are converted to Christianity, face several challenges in their journey towards liberation. In the discussions on the identity of Dalit Christians there is a challenge and prospect arising out of their multiple identities. This paper is written from the perspective of religious identity of Dalit Christians, which provides space for a challenge and a prospect for the whole movement of Dalit Christians. Though there are several perspectives on Dalit Christian plights in our Church and society today, like that of their struggle for equal constitutional rights, their struggle against casteist Christians within the Church, the struggle of Dalit Christian women for dignity, and related concerns, the present paper is limited to the understanding of the multiple identities of Dalit Christians, which has been debated in several quarters in the Church and society. This discussion on the multiple identities of Dalit Christians becomes important, with the rise of numbers of Dalit Christians in the Churches of India today. In order to help us understand the issue of Dalit identity, I begin with a case study.

### **1. The Case Study on Dalit Christian Identity**

*Joshua Peter, a Christian from Scheduled Caste (Mala) origin in Andhra Pradesh takes his daughter Mary to get*

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*her admitted in the local panchayat school taking a day off from his routine agricultural labour, which he does for his livelihood. The upper caste Hindu teacher in the school, briefs Joshua to enrol his daughter Mary with another name so that she can avail scholarships, mid-day meal facilities and other benefits under the Scheduled Caste status granted by the government, for a Christian name and identity may not guarantee such facilities. Thus Joshua had to think of another name, which may be Hindu or non-denominational, but not overtly Christian. With the consent of her father, the teacher enrolls Mary as Raja Kumari, and the child is forced to remember her new name for the sake of attendance. Joshua's dismal economic condition forces him to declare them officially as Hindu (Adi Andhra Mala), to qualify for SC benefits; however they continue to practice Christianity in their day to day life, associating with the life of the Church. The official identity of the Dalit Christians in Andhra Pradesh, which is a Hindu one, is only a declared identity, not a professed or practiced one. (Illustration modified from Ashok Kumar & Roweena Robinson, 2010: 150)*

This narrative provides the perspective, in the formation of identity for Dalit Christians right from their childhood, to practice and get used to their Hindu name in 'public' and also to hold on to their Christian faith in 'private.' Forcing on a new identity onto little Mary has several repercussions on her self-identity, self-belief and self-dignity. Mary has a Christian identity by faith, a Hindu identity by law and continues with her outcaste identity by experience having been born in a Dalit Mala family.

Christians of Scheduled Caste origin, popularly known as Dalit Christians in India today form 1.3% of the total population, and by rule of thumb, form about 80% of the Indian Christian population which experiences discrimination and exclusion in every quarter of life. A Dalit Christian like Mary, also called Raj Kumari, continues to undergo alienation, humiliation and marginalisation and suffers from five-fold discrimination, i) by the hostile Hindu society, for she is from an Untouchable community, ii) by the unfriendly government since she affirms her faith in Christianity as Dalit, iii) by the fellow Hindu

Dalits for availing the benefits of Scheduled Caste though she doesn't practice Hindu faith, iv) by the unredeemed caste minded Christian community, who think Mary and her family are lower to them in caste v) by the sub-groups of the Dalit Christians themselves who think they are chosen ones and who sacrificed their benefits for faith, for they think Mary was unfaithful to the commitment of Christian faith for accepting to be legally Hindu.

Added to these discriminations, the identity of Dalit Christians on the one hand has also been at risk, for there are multiple-identities, which are imposed and are further pushed to marginality. On the other hand, the identity is a symbol of resilience celebrating it. There has always been a dialectical tension between two trajectories of identities for Dalit Christians, which provide a challenge and prospect. To understand this, it would be worth knowing how the category of Dalit Christians emerged or evolved.

## **2. Dalits Conversion to Christianity**

The history of Christianity in India has enough records on 'mass conversions' among Dalits. The highest number of Dalits that converted to Christianity was in Andhra Pradesh when John Clough, the Baptist missionary led these conversions. There have been several debates around these 'mass conversions'. What caused such huge conversions? Were they lured into conversion? Were they converted for material benefits? Were the conversions for purposes of mobility from oppression? The questions go on. However to understand conversions of Dalits to Christianity, I wish to reflect here on two worldviews from history that engage with the question of conversions, one from Gandhi and the other from Ambedkar.

### **i. Conversion for Convenience:**

Gandhi has been a strong critic of Christian missions and religious conversions, for he has always emphasised spiritual motives vis-à-vis material motives. Gandhi even labelled conversion as "the deadliest poison that ever sapped the fountain of truth." As a proponent of *Swadeshi*, Gandhi found conversion to Christianity objectionable because he claimed that conversion discounted the great truths in the Indian traditions, and it also amounted to 'denationalisation.' He also believed that conversion of Dalits to Christianity was merely a matter

of ‘convenience’, motivated by the need to fill their stomachs than a spiritual transformation. He even likened preaching the gospel to a Dalit to preaching it to a cow. (Mallampalli, 2006: 162-163)

This was a view that influenced most critics of Christian missions and the adherents of Hindutva including the recent Arun Shourie. Most of those belonging to this school of thought assume that Dalits are like dumb cows, who do not apply their mind or intellect when considering conversion to other faiths; that they are drawn to the material benefits given by the Christian mission organizations. This drives Dalits in general and Dalit Christians in particular to further marginality, for in all their vulnerability, conversions have further added salt to the wounds of Dalits.

## **ii. Conversion as Autonomy:**

Ambedkar represents the other school of thought. He affirms conversions for Dalits as he thinks of it as a fight for separation and autonomy from Hindu religion and society. He was also critical of Gandhi’s view on conversion, for Gandhi’s double standards were applied to Muslims and Christians. Ambedkar also was critical of Gandhi’s proposition that all religions are equal. Ambedkar pointed out that it is precisely because all religions are not equal, that Dalits choose to go into other religions that affirm equality to them. Conversion, Ambedkar opined ‘is as important to the Untouchable as self-government is to India.’ (Mallampalli, 2006:163-164)

This school of thought, which Ambedkar represents, believes that conversion is a way paving mobility from the cruel discriminatory caste into liberation and transformation. Dalits in this case chose to convert to Christianity to affirm a life of dignity, which was not provided in their previous religions. Christianity provided a way of life, a sense of equality and a spirituality of combat and resistance in fighting against forces of discrimination.

## **3. Dalit hyphenated Christian**

As Dalits convert to Christianity, many Christian leaders have maintained that ‘there is no longer male or female, master or slave, Jew or gentile...’ and therefore no longer do they exist as Dalits, but as full Christians. But in reality, with the conversion of religion, there is no conversion of caste, for the baggage of caste identity continues within



and outside the Church. Is Dalit an adjective to the Christian identity for Dalit Christians, qualifying the Christian-ness or is it vice versa? Is Dalit Christian a noun by itself? More than a debate on the 'parts of speech', it is the Dalit-ness that qualifies the Christian-ness and Christian-ness qualifies the Dalit-ness in the Dalit Christian identity. Consciousness is a key to Dalit identity, however different this consciousness may be. It needs to be acknowledged that there is diversity in the Dalit-Christian perception of this identity. This ranges from identifying oneself as solely Christian who has relinquished one's Dalit past to identifying oneself as solely Dalit who is yet active in Church. Between these two are several who consciously alternate between Dalit secular identity and religious Christian identity, with multiple layers of consciousness. Multiple liabilities suffered by Dalit Christians in terms of discrimination according to John Webster, gave rise to a distinct Dalit consciousness even within Christian circles (John Webster, 1992:128-129).

#### **4. The Dialectical Tensions between Dalit & Christian Identity**

With regard to Dalits converting to Christianity, several studies have shown the tension between the 'continuity-discontinuity' from the Dalit cultures to Christian ethos that they encounter. In the 'conversion-reversion' of Dalit Christians as Harper proposes, "converts move back and forth between old ritual and caste practices and the new Christian identity." According to Harper, "Bishop V. S. Azariah presented Anglican Christianity to Andhra's depressed classes as a dramatic alternative to their former religious practices and was often frustrated by the tendency of converts to treat the new faith and its practices as complements to the old." (Harper, 2000: 252) M. E. Prabhakar further described this movement between the old Dalit rituals and the new Christian appropriations as 'dialectical existentialism', a term used to refer to the two dimensional consciousness among Dalit Christians. (M. E. Prabhakar, 1986:47). As these dialectical tensions brooded over the Dalit Christian identities, the exclusions and discrimination that they encountered continued to challenge and shape the Christian consciousness among Dalit Christians.

## **5. By faith Christian, by law Hindu, by experience Outcaste: the Dalit Christian's multiple layers of Identity**

Every Dalit Christian, after conversion is a sum total of several identities. This is the case especially because of the discrimination and exclusion foisted on Christians of Scheduled Caste origin by the Indian state over the last 61 years. By not ascribing the Scheduled Caste (SC) status to Dalit Christians, it has brought to the front several challenges to the identity of Dalit Christians. The 1950 Presidential Order of the Indian Constitution deprives justice and equal rights to Dalits who were converted to Christianity and Islam and denied them the Scheduled Caste status unlike other Dalits brothers and sisters who were converted to Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism.

In this context, Christians of Scheduled Caste origins despite their loyalty to their Christian faith, have registered themselves as Hindus in their caste certificates, in order to avail the benefits given by the government, such as educational scholarships, opportunities to contest in legislative elections in reserved constituencies, security from Prevention of Atrocities Act (POA) of SC/ST in times of atrocities. This multiple identity is something unique to Dalit Christians alone, for their counterparts like Dalit Hindus, Dalit Sikhs and Dalit Buddhists all enjoy both the Constitutional rights of Scheduled Castes and also enjoy the freedom of religion by openly professing and practicing their own faith, in this land of secularism.

Ashok Kumar and Rowena Robinson therefore explain the dual identity (Hindu & Christian) among Dalit Christians, "as a symbol of the group's sub-ordination/marginality and also a product of structurally imposed marginality. As a product, dual identity emerges as the outcome of the need to cope with concerns about identity and social marginality." (Ashok Kumar & Roweena Robinson, 2010:150) This calls for a discussion on this multiple identity among Dalit Christians to be considered as both a challenge and as a prospect; it is a challenge in terms of the imposed marginality and struggle that these Dalit Christians undergo and prospect in terms of expressing their resilience to the continuing exclusion and discrimination that they undergo.

## **6. Multiple Identities and Multiplicity of Marginality**

It was not a voluntary choice of Joshua Peter to enrol Mary as a Hindu in her school, but since his context demanded it, he had to succumb to the State's political ploy of forcing its citizens to be under the rubric of Hinduism. With these multiple identities borne by Mary who for the purpose of records is called Raj Kumari, she continues to undergo several kinds of humiliation from her peers, in her community and in her church as well, which is not free from the practice of discrimination. As a little one, Mary faces, on a daily basis, the challenge of holding together her multiple identities and in that process experiences a multiplicity of forms of marginality in her life. For want of time, allow me to present these forms of marginality from three quarters that impact Dalit Christian Mary's daily life.

### **i. Marginality from the Church**

The Church, which objectively needs to be a place of equality and which believes in justice for all human beings, unfortunately has fallen into the trap of allowing caste prejudices to overtake and overrule. Mary and her family are discriminated in the Church, for they are looked down upon as weak people; who could not live up to the faith in Jesus Christ; and as those who have compromised their faith, in the furnace of testing which the Indian State provides by denying the SC status. Mary and her family are denied the rituals and sacraments that the Church gives to the other Christians of a homogenous identity, as Christian both by law and by practice. Mary and her family members are denied membership in the Church, and thereby denied the opportunity to participate in the governance of the Church. Mary and her family members, who have multiple identities, would not be allowed to marry other mono identity Christians, for the Christians think of their superiority and purity over these Dalit Christians. The Church brands these Dalit Christians with labels such as unchristian and unspiritual. Therefore, these Dalit Christians are further pushed into the margins of the Church, bearing the brunt of further discrimination and exclusion.

### **ii. Marginality from Community**

The school which Mary attends is the first social space during which the multiple identities are solidified in her. The formation of identity building takes places here in this space. The upper caste Hindu teacher

who persuaded Mary's father to enrol her as a Hindu, looks down upon Mary and discriminates against her in the school, for Mary will not be treated as equal to the other Hindus in her class. In the educational institutions, SC Dalit Christians are marginalised and humiliated since the upper caste students think reservations are a shortcut to come to such places, where merit is discounted. The community which is casteist in its outlook, looks down upon the Dalit Christians, for they complain that these Dalit Christians receive benefits both from the Church in their institutions, for they are Christians and also receive the benefits from the Indian state because they are legally Hindu Dalits. Which in reality is not true, for the Church discriminates against these Dalit Christians by not affirming them as Christian. Therefore, these Dalit Christians with multiple identities are vulnerable in that they are marginalised both by the Church and by the community in which they live.

### **iii. Marginality within Self-identity**

With marginality coming from both the social spaces of Church and society, Mary struggles within herself to hold together her multiple identities. A trauma within her as to who she is, in terms of her identity, a Christian by faith, a Hindu by law and an outcaste by experience. The society pushes Mary and her family into further marginality and she is made to feel guilty for though they are Christian, they are really not, though they are Hindu, they are really not and their exclusion within Church and society knows no bounds. Identity is formed in all freedom and given the context of marginality, the self-identity is put to risk, for it diminishes one's self-worth. Thus Dalit Christians, with marginality enveloping them, find that rather than realising their self-identity, these multiple identities do not cohere to affirm life and identity in all their fullness. These multiple identities intensify the marginality of Dalit Christians, and shrink the social space in which they can affirm who they are. The psyche of Dalit Christians is further wounded to its core with all these multiple identities weighing upon them. Multiple identities for Dalit Christians have been a challenge, and the stress on them to cope with these identities and threatens the prospect of their ever being able to live lives of dignity.

## 7. Multiple Identities As Symbol of Resilience for Dalit Christians

On the other hand, despite adding marginality to their identity, for Dalit Christians these multiple identities serve as a symbol of resilience in overcoming their experiences of pollution and marginality.

On observing the faith of Dalit Christians in Eastern India, Khare says that, “the non-Christian wider society calls the Christians ‘Chamar Christians’, but they are ‘Dalit Christians’. ‘Chamar’ is a received, inherited identity. They have attached the ‘Dalit’ prefix as part of the new consciousness. The Christian dimension of the identity expressed itself earlier as ‘Chamar Christians’ or ‘Harijan Christians’. At the time, legally and politically they were referred to as the Depressed classes. These terms have been replaced with ‘Dalit Christians’ and ‘Scheduled Caste Christians’ respectively. Their Christian identity seems to represent their symbolic and religious re-formulation; a break from their past; their attempt to assume greater equality, freedom and justice and to seek a new world view under an alternate socio-religious system. Opting for this system is a ‘repossession’ of personal and social capabilities and a ‘calculated cultural move’ towards attainment of desired aims. (Khare 1984: 30)

### i. Multiple Identities as affirming the Mobility to Equality

On receiving multiple identities, Dalit Christians affirm their mobility towards equality, for by asserting their identities, these Dalit Christians have a space to transfer their consciousness from oppression to liberation, from the forces of death to those of life. Multiple identities are expression of hope towards a new life, for once they were fully crushed under the rubric of caste, but a religious conversion gave a new identity, and a new life, despite their caste remaining the same. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar tried for special electorates for Dalits as a way out to affirm equality with others, but when it did not come true in history, he called for religious conversion as a way out. So, in 1935, the year when Gandhi made a controversial statement: ‘if I had power and could legislate, the first thing I would ban is conversions,’ was the year Ambedkar also made a historical statement on religious conversions, “though I have been born a Hindu, I shall not die as a Hindu.” (Michael, 2010: 66)

Therefore, with religious conversions of Dalits to Christianity, multiple identities evolved and that led to the possibility of a life in self-respect and self-dignity. Mary and her family, particularly her father Joshua Peter, who has been a victim of caste, for generations, have borne the brunt of discrimination within the fold of the caste system. But conversion to Christianity was a path to autonomy for Peter and his family, helping them to escape from the forces of caste. And on becoming Dalit Christian, his multiple identities helped him to break with his old culture which oppressed him and to move towards a life of liberation.

## **ii. Multiple Identities as way of Expressing Resilience**

Dalit Christians with identities of multiple layers neither fully appropriated the new, caste-free 'Christian identity' nor were willing to adhere to their previous ritual past. Therefore, this tension enabled them to travel from Christian consciousness to Dalit consciousness and even the other way. This was fuelled by the failure of both Church and government to recognise and respond to the disadvantages faced by Dalit Christians. (Mallampalli, 2006: 190) Therefore, the multiple identities of Dalit Christians provided them a space to express their resilience against the failure of both Church and State in recognising the struggles of Dalit Christians. The multiple identities gave space to celebrate their new identity, which gave them new affirmation of self, for they knew though by law they are Hindu, their faith in Christ has no compromise. Multiple identities for Dalit Christians are also a space for resilience against the caste Christians, and against the Hindu Dalits. For Mary and her family, these multiple identities have now turned into an expression of resilience, for when the Church has not been recognising their struggles, the merely legal Hindu identity has not deterred them from attending Church.

"The conversions of the lowest of the low were indeed a powerful and, at the same time, risky act of rebellion in the communally charged atmosphere of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was not the material gains primarily which led the 'Chuharas' (in Punjab) to adopt Christianity, rather it was a transforming power of religious acceptance which impelled the lower caste people to shift to a religion looked at with suspicion by many in their own villages and cities. Christianity provided them with a new identity that made them change their names, eating habits and provided numerous other opportunities

for self-betterment. The new religious identity in fact provided a cushion for the helpless Dalits in the highly oppressive caste structure of the village. In their struggle for survival, status and gain within the village the Dalits could now rely safely on the presence and influence of the Christian missionaries.” (John Webster, 1999:103) Therefore, for Dalit Christians, their multiple identities have today given them a new confidence in life in overcoming caste discrimination and the ramifications of oppressions on the one hand, while on the other they have enabled them to lead life with hope for greater self-worth and the betterment of society.

Therefore, multiple identities for Dalit Christians, have given them a new identity, and an opportunity to express their resilience against all the opposing forces of every quarter of life.

## **Conclusion**

The multiple identities as layered in Dalit Christians, on the one hand has pushed them to further marginality, and on the other hand provided a space to express their resilience against all insensitivity to the struggles towards liberation. For Dalit Christians, the Hindu identity is not their performed religious identity, their experience as outcastes as a continuing identity, is a challenge for the Church and society to overcome the marginality and strengthen the resilience of Dalit Christians. These multiple identities of Dalit Christians are a challenge for themselves, as they have to cope with the kinds of marginality they experience. And against the backdrop of the Church and the State being insensitive to the struggles of Dalit Christians, these multiple identities need to challenge the Church and the Christian community in India to address and advocate for the justice of Dalit Christians, and motivate them to lobby for the SC status for Christians of Dalit origin, in order to establish justice and equality. Dalit Christian struggle for justice is not just a Christian issue, nor just a Dalit issue but a human rights issue and a constitutional issue because it is all about a historically oppressed group of people claiming their right to lead lives of dignity. These multiple identities of Dalit Christians also call on the communities in India to affirm the right of citizens to choose and profess their religion, for neither on the basis of caste nor on the basis of religion, should discrimination be allowed to stand. Dalit Christian identity is an identity to celebrate in the journey towards liberation. It

was the marginality of Dalit Christians that led to the martyrdom of Dalit Christians recently at Kandhamal in Orissa, and it is only fitting that I invoke the strength that emanates from their faith and from their Dalit-ness.

*Martyr O Dalit Christian martyr,  
Your lives were made a satire,  
By those with that saffron attire,  
For some are killed by fire,  
And some made as pyre,  
On whom they had to play their lyre,  
Of hatred, vengeance, death entire.*

*You stand as an inspiration,  
your faith withstood the intimidation,  
by forces of caste and condemnation.  
may we carry your spirit of perspiration,  
to keep up your aspiration.*

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## Palestine Today: A Dalit Perspective

- Vincent Manoharan

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### Prelude-The Conflict

Palestine is a region with a majority Arab population in the Middle East, where Jews and Samaritans also live. Historically it was under the rule of many empires which include Greek, Byzantine, Roman, Ottoman and British. From the early years of the 20th century, the Jews who were scattered across the world, especially in Europe, began to arrive and occupy Palestine. In 1948, when the Palestinians resisted, a war broke out between Palestinians and Israelis. The Israelis won and established their rule in Palestine. The Palestine-Israeli conflict has intensified for the last 72 years, and has caused around 10 lakhs Palestinians, as of now, to suffer as refugees within Palestine and also in neighboring countries, besides Asia, Europe and Northern Americas. While Palestinians looked for global support for their freedom and justice, the Israeli settlers, gained the support of the US and its allies Britain, German and Egypt and deepened their aggression against Palestinian natives. The UN Resolution that mandates for a two-nation solution as 'Jewish and Arab nations' for both people to live in peace, was undermined by Israel, which continues to claim that the whole of Palestine constitutes a Jewish nation. Palestinians are squeezed owing to the expansionist move of the Israelis and desperately seek the support of the global community and of international governments for their struggle for justice. Unfortunately, Israel gradually begins to win the support of other Arab countries like UAE, Bahrain and Sudan who were once the supporters of Palestine. This being the trend, Palestinians intensify their call for global support for their right to land, life, livelihood and self-determination. This article tries to view the status of Palestinians through a Dalit Lens, as Dalits in India too face similar oppression and violence at the hands of casteism, which is an offshoot of Brahmanical Hinduism.

### Emergence of Zionism – Offensive to Palestine

Jews were scattered across the world and substantial percentage lived in Central Europe mainly in Germany and in Eastern Europe for

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generations together. In the later part of 19th century, 'anti-Semitic' tendency emerged and Jews were under persecution by the locals. This tyranny pressurized Jews to search for their own nation. As a result, Zionism, a philosophy that existed for several hundred years, emerged as a strong 'political cum religious ideology' with the aim of establishing a Jewish nation, with Judaism as its official religion. Theodor Herzl, a Jewish Journalist from Austria is known as the Father of Political Zionism, as he organised the first Zionist congress in 1897 in Basel, Switzerland with a conviction that Jews could survive only by establishing a 'Jewish Nation'. This event encouraged Jews to establish their own nation in Palestine, with a Biblical claim that their ancestors lived there centuries back. With the conviction that Palestine was their ancestral home land, Jews from Eastern Europe began moving to Palestine. The 'Holocaust' which took the lives of around 6 million Jews from 1941-1945, mainly in Germany and Nazi-occupied Poland, created a greater sense of urgency among Jews to move to Palestine for their settlement.

### **Brief Historicity of Palestine and intrusion by Zionists**

Palestine was occupied by the Philistines, who have their roots in the Biblical Canaanites. Since 12th Century B.C, they were under continuous invasion and rule by a number of empires and the latest was that of the Ottomans who lost to the British during the 1st World War (1914-1919). During the I World War, the British, through the Balfour Declaration (9th Nov 1917), favored the Jewish aspiration to have their nation established in Palestine. It was declared as a concept and slogan that "A Land without People will be a Land for People without Land". Palestinians rejected this decision which ingenuously ignored the very existence of Palestinians in this land for several centuries. In addition to this, the colonial masters, the British, played a game of injustice, by conceding to Zionists to have right over the land of their colony, for which they did not have any moral or legal right or locus-standi. This too was resisted by Palestinians. When the British mandate was withdrawn, the UN passed a Resolution in 1948 for partition of Palestine to establish 'two nations - one for Jews and the other for Arabs'. Again, this was termed a callous act of all the so-called powerful countries in the world who managed the affairs of UN. However, the only solace was that at least the UN resolved to create two nations in the country of Palestine - one for Jews, (the Zionists),

and the other for Palestinians, (the Arabs, which included local Jews and Samaritans). All these were rejected outright by Palestinians which led to a war between the Zionist intruders and the native Palestinians in May 1948. The Israelis defeated the Arabs, as they had the support of US and colonial masters. This Nakba, the catastrophe, turned around 7 lakh Palestinians into refugees, both inland and in neighboring countries. This war resulted in Egypt occupying the Gaza strip, and Jordan occupying the West Bank. This gave way for a never-ending conflict between these two races, mainly the Jews and Arabs.

In 1964, the PLO – Palestine Liberation Organisation-was established to control Israel's annexation move. The PLO was recognized by the Arab League and as a result UN awarded it an observer status in its General Assembly. Later, again in 1967, a war broke out – with Israel pitted against Palestine, Egypt, Jordan and Syria. Within 6 days of the war, Israel retrieved the Gaza Strip from Egypt, West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan and attached Golan Heights from Syria, besides forcing another 3.35 lakh Palestinians into refugee status. This was called the second Nakba. The conflict intensified and negotiations for a settlement culminated in the Oslo accord in 1993 which led to a UN resolution for peace and non-terrorism in Palestine and Israel. PLO, in 1994, established Palestinian National Authority (PNA or PA) to govern parts of West Bank and Gaza Strip. An internal conflict emerged in 2006 among Palestinians which led to Hamas, a Sunni fundamental group, claiming its control over Gaza Strip. This rift among Palestinians came to an end with a unity arrived at in 2014. In 2019, the UN recognized PA as a separate state.

In the meantime, Israel emerged more powerful mainly with the support of the US and deepened its claim to declare Jerusalem as its capital, much against the UN resolution to keep 'Jerusalem a Holy City for all the three Abrahamic Religions' under the control of a separate independent regional body. In addition to that, Israel advanced its expansion towards the West Bank which was seen as a gross violation of the peace agreement between Israel and PA, monitored by the UN. Adding insult to injury, Israel negated the UN resolution and is moving forward to declare whole of Palestine an Israeli -Jewish nation which takes away the rights of Palestinians totally, ignoring their history, race, ethnicity, life and livelihood. The US on its part has played a very disruptive role by shifting its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and

also evolved a plan in the name of ‘Deal of the Century’ much against the will of the Palestinians. The US and Israel evolved this plan which has two sides – one, the economic side, which proposes pumping funds to Palestinians for their development and the other, political side, to reduce Palestine to a state within the Israeli Jewish nation. PA objected to this and rejected this plan as the ‘Slap of the Century’. In short, there is no hope of peace in sight and the conflict between Palestine and Israel is only getting worse day by day, with the Palestinians continuing to pay a heavy price in terms of losing their land and national identity.

### **Current oppressed status of Palestinians**

Palestinians face numerous kinds of oppressions at the hands of Zionist Israelis. *To quote a few:*

- First and foremost is the invasion, expansion of occupation and formation of more settlements by Zionist Israelis to accommodate Jews who arrive in Palestine;
- Jews claim that they have source in Bible that they are the ‘Chosen people of Yahweh and Palestine is the Promised land’ of their ancestors. Therefore, they have the legacy and every right to occupy Palestine and chase others out;
- Israelis keep on extending their call, time and again, for Jews across the world to move in to Israel as their homeland. For example, recently Israel brought 2000 Ethiopian Jews out of 13,000 living in Addis Ababa. This is a follow-up to its earlier airlifting of 14,500 Jews in 1991 owing to the Civil War in Ethiopia. In 2015 Israel committed itself to bringing back the remaining Jews from that country.
- The Zionists claim that Israel is a Jewish nation;
- The Jewish settlers on occupied Israeli-occupied Palestinian lands are provided with all civic amenities like flats, houses, round the clock water supply, electricity, good roads and all basic needs to lead a decent and self-contained life. The same has been denied largely to the Palestinians who live in the territory of occupied Palestine.
- Israel has been raising 40 feet height walls - known as ‘Walls of Separation’ - with the justification that they are being built merely to protect Jews from Palestinian attacks. This restricts the mobility of Palestinians who are forced to live outside the

walls. This prevents access to their lands and properties outside the walls; they are not able to carry out agricultural and other activities or business for their livelihood;

- Check posts are set up at various points along the walls, where Palestinians are stopped and frisked in the name of checking their identity-proper records/passes/ for crossing the boundaries. The aged, women, children and students are the worst affected as their mobility is at stake, although it is their own country and homeland; there have been many instances of the sick and the pregnant not being allowed in time to access much needed medical care.
- Israel prevents the entry of Palestinians from other nations into Israel where their family members and relatives have been living for generations together. Their access to their families is denied, which is a denial of all forms of human rights;
- The wars that took place in 1948 and 1967 forced around 10 lakh Palestinians into internal refugee status and today they live within Israel but without proper civic amenities, basic rights and privileges;
- There are Palestinian refugees in the neighboring countries such as Jordan, Syria and Lebanon mainly;
- The properties and assets of refugees were confiscated by Israeli Govt;
- The 'right to return' has been denied for the refugees even after 72 years;
- Palestinians who live within occupied territories of Israel are fearful and traumatized;
- Jerusalem is considered to be the Holy city for the three Abrahamic Faiths- Judaism, Islam and Christianity; But Israel keeps on claiming that Jerusalem is theirs, much against the will of Palestinians and also against UN resolutions. Israel prevents their easy access to the Holy places;
- Israelis shifted their capital from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, undermining UN resolution and this is feared to have had an adverse impact on Palestinians;
- Expansion of settlements results in loss of more land and livelihood options for Palestinians;
- All-natural resources and wealth in Palestine is being owned, exploited and manipulated by Israel and the objections of Palestinians fall on deaf ears ;

- Israeli police and military personnel are ruthless in dealing with Palestinians, especially the youth and women; Checkpoints are the visible places of harassment and torture;
- In the name of search or checking, Israeli police and military enter into the houses of Palestinians at odd hours and treat them very inhumanely;
- Israel connives with US and its allies and strengthens its military base; it uses all weapons against Palestinians who live in the Gaza strip, branding them as militants and terrorists; even for small violations, Israel uses its bombs and air attacks on innocent people;
- Slowly Israel starts winning the support of Arab countries; UAE, Bahrain and Sudan are the recent examples; this trend is a setback to the Palestinian assertion for justice;
- Israel and US arrived at a master plan in the name of ‘Deal of the Century’ which supports Israel as the Jewish nation in violation of the UN resolution for a two-nation reality; This is feared to lead to ‘one nation, one religion, one culture theory’ which is detrimental to the very being of Palestine and Palestinians;

### **Dissenting Voices – Call for support for Justice**

Arabs – most of whom are Muslims- are the majority among Palestinians (around 80-85%) and they look forward to the support of Arab countries; It is mostly a political move.

Christians form around 15-20% and have Arab, Jewish or Samaritan ethnicity. Jews who follow Christianity are being called Christian Jews. They try to get the support of Christian community across the world for their rights. For example, Kairos Palestine, an organisation formed in 2009, contacts Christians around the world to help fight the Israeli occupation and violence. They issued a call in 2009 as a “Call from Palestinian Christians to Christians around the world” to support their cause. Recently Global Kairos for Justice attached to KP has issued a fresh call with the caption “Cry for Hope”, urging the ‘support of global Christians to the cause of Palestinians’.

There are around 10-12 major human rights organisations functioning within Palestine under Palestinian Human Rights Organisations

Council (PHROC), who work for the legal and developmental rights of Palestinians with advocacy interventions both within and through the UN, mainly for the safety and rights of children, women and refugees. These are the major initiatives in Palestine, other than the efforts of Palestinian Authority at the governmental level.

In short, ‘Zionism as a Political cum Religious Ideology’ has invaded Palestine and established its Apartheid rule for the last 72 years, that too in the name of their scripture. This is detrimental to the very being-life, livelihood, dignity, liberty, freedom and justice - of Palestinians and also a threat to peace, both in Palestine and in Israel.

### **Palestine through a Dalit Lens**

#### **The origin of Caste and the forms of Untouchability**

Dalits, the so-called untouchables, number about 260 million in South Asia, with the majority living in India. The Brahmanical ‘Sanatana Dharma’, a religious concept, is said to have been the main source for Varna Theory which established the caste system. Dalits are said to have been historically Dravidians and even Adi-Dravidians (the Primitive Dravidians) who were the people of this soil. They lived a glorious life with a laudable culture as part of the Indus valley civilization. During the Vedic period, some 3000 years ago, Aryans, an Indo-Iranian Race, moved from mid-Asia to India with their cattle, looking for pastures. They found this scattered Dravidian community and in order to establish their settlement that too with supremacy, they are said to have introduced this caste theory in order to divide the locals and discriminate against them, as that alone would help their stay and sustenance in this soil. Brahmanical Hinduism claimed that human beings were created by the God of Creation, from his forehead, shoulders, thigh and feet. Those who were created from the forehead were termed Brahmins, those who emanated from the shoulders were Kshatriyas, from the thigh, Vaishyas, and from the feet the Shudras, ‘the Untouchables’. Each category was said to have a divinely entrusted Dharma/duty to perform. Brahmins, who are at the top of the caste ladder formed the priestly class who were to chant mantras, perform worship and rituals; Kshatriyas as ruling class-kings and warriors- to protect people; Vaishyas, as merchant class to engage in trade and business and the last, Shudras, as serving class for all the above mentioned three categories and also to undertake manual labour for the wellbeing of all. The concept of ‘purity and pollution’ was

introduced and these classified people are forced to observe 'endogamy' to maintain their purity and caste positions. Each category was prohibited from contracting matrimonial relationships with those outside itself, which was supposed to have been against the very purpose of the creator God. But, in the course of human development, those who married crossing caste boundaries, especially the Shudras marrying a higher caste Hindu, came to be termed "out-castes" and 'impure'. Since they negated the plan of God and became impure as well, these 'outcastes' were termed Panchamas, the fifth class-condemned as 'unseeables', let alone as untouchables, and were forced into segregation and exclusion from mainstream human life. This is said to have been the history and origin of Unseeables cum Untouchables. In the course of development, the Panchamas became Untouchables, lower even than the Shudras. Brahmanical Hinduism divided human beings by birth and assigned Shudras/Panchamas to the status of 'Untouchables'. The British, the colonial rulers for two centuries, called them the 'Depressed Class', the Constitution of independent India termed them 'Scheduled Class' and they have named themselves 'Dalits', meaning the 'broken and marginalized, anti-castes and inclusivists'.

Casteism is known for exclusion and divisive characteristics. It is a source for framing graded inequality among humans in terms of promoting and sustaining hierarchy, hereditary status, endogamy, impurity, patriarchy, lower occupational status, cruelty and marginalization. As a result, Dalits, the outcastes, face four major areas of oppression: (i) restriction – not treated on par with others in places of inhabitation, burial, no access to common places viz, temples, water resources, using public paths and matrimonial relationship etc., (ii) disability – denied education, employment, land, livelihood, access to entrepreneurship, political power etc., (iii) forced into menial jobs – sweeping, garbage removal, scavenging, manual scavenging, rag picking, drum beating for funerals, grave digging, guarding cemeteries and cremation grounds and (iv) perpetuation of violence and atrocities in the form of murder, physical maiming, social boycott, naked parading of Dalit women, rape and gang rape, destruction of properties etc., if caste norms are questioned and challenged.

In short, present-day Dalits are socially ostracized, economically exploited and politically powerless. They are forced to undergo all forms of exclusion, humiliation, harassment, deprivation and violence



in the name of caste. Therefore, Dalits of today are uniting to raise their voices against this inhuman caste system and to challenge its origin, perpetuation and perpetration. Dalits find the mechanisms that are in place for ensuring social justice - the dignity, equality and justice - in the form of Constitutional safe guards (Art 17 mainly), special legislations (SC/ST(PoA), duty bearers (mainly Police), judiciary and monitoring mechanisms (HR Institutions), have largely proved to be inefficient and deficient, as they are controlled by Non-Dalits who have the caste mindset. The glaring example is that in 2018, according to NCRB report, around 42,793 cases were registered against Non-Dalit perpetrators of caste-based violence, under the SC/ST (PoA) Act 2016, which goes to show how extensively Dalits are under attack by the Casteists. But the conviction rate is only 25.2% of the reported offences, which is abysmally low. This figure affirms not only the inefficiency of protective mechanisms, but also the caste mindset of duty bearers. The same is the case with affirmative action schemes and programs which are yet to realise their objectives.

Dalit Christians also face a measure of caste-based discrimination within the Indian Church, even if not to the same extent as they face in the larger society. They are yet to gain ‘their adequate or proportionate space in the Ecclesiastical hierarchy’, ‘freed from caste practices within parishes and congregations’ and also to get ‘adequate representation in the power positions of Church Institutions both educational, medical and service oriented’. They are also still stigmatized by the state which denies the Scheduled Caste status to the Christians of Scheduled caste origin. This denial prevents Dalit Christians to enjoy ‘legal protection, special provisions to assert political power and economic empowerment’.

### **Parallels – Zionism and Casteism**

This being the overall status of Dalits under the Brahmanical caste system and the untouchability practices, it is easy for Dalits and Dalit Christians to discern and to empathise with the plight and suffering of Palestinians at the hands of Jewish Zionists. There are clearly some parallels between these two communities in terms of the oppression that they undergo in the name of Zionism and Brahmanism/Hindutva/Casteism-BHC, respectively.

*To quote a few features :*

- Palestine has been the homeland for Palestinians for thousands of years, as India has been for Dalits;
- Palestinians suffer under Zionism; Dalits under Brahmanical casteism;
- Zionism breeds a form of Apartheid; Casteism breeds untouchability;
- Zionism is a divisive ideology having roots in Judaism; Hindutva/casteism is also divisive, having its roots in Brahmanical Hinduism;
- Zionists mix religion with politics; so is the case with Brahmanical Hindutva forces who mix religion with politics;
- Zionism believes in the concept of purity, in much the same way as Jews see themselves the chosen race of God; Brahmanism also believes in the purity concept and claims that Brahmins are superior in the caste ladder;
- Many Zionist-minded Israelis claim to be the descendants of Jacob and also argue that the Jewish race is superior to all other races, including Arabs; Brahmins, the descendants of Aryans, also claim that they are superior to other casts and to other inhabitants of India;
- Israeli Jews maintain endogamy and Brahmins too subscribe to endogamy;
- Israelis claim that their religion ‘Judaism’ is the oldest and sanctified by God; Brahmins too claim that ‘Brahmanical Hinduism’ is the oldest and matchless;
- Israelis claim that their Language ‘Hebrew’ is superior; Brahmins claim that Sanskrit is the Divine language;
- Israelis claim that Palestine is the land of their ancestors and they have a right over it; Brahmins claim that as the Superior caste, they have the first right to own land in India;
- Jewish people claim that Jerusalem is their Holy City and others don’t have a right over it; Brahmins too claim that every Hinduist Holy city and temples in India, are theirs;
- Israelis raise ‘separation walls’ to exclude themselves from Palestinians; India too has ‘invisible caste walls’ in every village and Dalits are prevented from entering inside villages;
- Israelis have implanted ‘check points’ and prevent the access of Palestinians into their area of living; an invisible ‘caste

- mindset' exists among Non-Dalits and Dalits are supposed not to use, share or occupy any of the public or common resources;
- Israelis live in full-fledged settlements with all amenities; Brahmins and Non-Dalits too live inside villages with all amenities, while Dalits are segregated and forced to live outside the village with limited basic amenities;
  - Palestinians are denied all rights over common and natural resources and the same is the case with Dalits in India;
  - Palestinians live as refugees within their own land; Dalits are the modern Indian refugees who live in exclusion in their own county;
  - Judaism insists that only Jews can become Rabbis and Brahmanism claims that Brahmins alone can become priests;
  - Zionists plan to declare Palestine a 'Jewish nation'; Hindutva forces try to declare India a 'Hindu Nation';
  - Zionists claim that Jewish culture is superior; Brahmins too claim that their culture is greater;
  - Zionists go hand in hand with 'Corporates in the name of Development' and so does Hindutva forces in India;
  - Zionism is undemocratic and Hindutva is also the same;
  - Zionists use their political power to silence democratic voices and Hindutva forces also do the same in India;
  - Zionism is patriarchal and so is Brahmanism;
  - Zionism is a threat to equality, liberty, freedom, justice and peace and the same is the case with Brahmanical Casteism.

In short, both Palestinians in the Middle East and Dalits in India are subject to very similar injustices such as ideology-based oppression, denigration by birth, endogamy, racial and ethnical discrimination, xenophobia, impurity, landlessness, denial of basic rights including access to common resources, subjugation, humiliation, harassment, state violence, threats, injustice and absence of peace.

## **The Challenge**

Dalits in India have their own issues and problems and they don't have time or knowledge or access to know about the plight of other communities that too in other countries. However, it will be easy for them to understand the plights of others, especially those who are in distress owing to similar forms of ideological onslaught and

oppression. Equally, they will be happy to give and get support to/from other similar people who are also equally discriminated against, disadvantaged and marginalized. If they are approached for extending solidarity to Palestinians who too struggle for their dignity, equality, freedom, liberty, justice and peace, they will definitely come on board for a dialogue or even for a joint venture type of liberation struggle. May be, it will be more-easy for Dalit Christians to understand the oppressed status of Palestinians as they have the first-hand knowledge of Biblical Israel and the nature of Jews. However, those among them who have become Christian Zionists may find it difficult to discern and internalize the problems being faced by Palestinians at the hands of Israeli Zionists. But once it is explained, it is certain that they will rise and act.

Christian Zionism hampers the Indian Church, its leaders and members, preventing them from accepting the fact that Biblical Israel is different from present day Zionist Israel. They do not know and hence do not care about what is actually happening in Palestine. Unfortunately, the Holy Land tours are ‘pilgrimage oriented’ and there is no objective or chance to peep into what is being done to Palestinians by Israeli Zionists. Even in spite of a little bit that they come to know, Christians still go by Genesis 12:1-3 and Deut: 16: 20 & 26: 1-3. Isaiah 66:8, Ezekiel 37:12 as all of these verses talk about the ‘blessings and promises’ that Abraham received from Yahweh. Christians across the globe largely, in line with Zionists, find it difficult to understand and discern “the essence in the word of God, the purpose for the selection of Abraham, the promises and covenants with tags, blessings with expectations of sin-free, obedient and shared life and also the caution put forth by Yahweh to him and his descendants for a life with justice”. Both Zionists and Christian Zionists conveniently set aside Deut: 15:15 and 24:18 where God warned them to remember that they were once slaves in Egypt. Christian Zionists largely fail to open their eyes, minds and hearts to look around, but continue to bless and pray for Israel and its well-being. In addition, similar to Zionists, in India, Christians and even Dalit Christians seldom understand the fact that ‘Land belongs to God’ and owning or snatching land is a curse. Elijah’s prophecy against Ahab for his greed to take the possession of the vineyard of Naboth is a great warning as defined in 1 Kings 21:1-16. Moreover, Christians and Dalit Christians do not seem to be much

aware of what Theology in general and Liberation Theology or Dalit Theology in particular are all about.

## Way Forward

We have a long way to go with regard to promoting deep and empathetic conversations with Dalits, and in particular with Dalit Christians, who are more or less in the same state of affairs in India, especially in the hands of Brahmanical and Hindutva forces. There is a need for Dalits in general and Dalit Christians in particular to understand the identical issues under which the Palestinians suffer. Both these communities need to initiate a dialogue between themselves, as oppressed communities, and try to evolve strategies to challenge the oppressors and their oppressive ideologies. Equally, they need to identify other oppressed and marginalized communities across the globe, who too suffer with similar bondage. Such an effort will help these communities to forge an alliance to raise their collective voice against the oppressors and their supremacist designs. As Dalit Theology, a contextual and liberational theology, portrays the matter, the oppressed (Dalits) have to struggle to combat caste and all forms of similar oppressions, not only for their own physical liberation but also precisely for the liberation of the oppressors who are in mental oppression, which is worse!

The need of the hour is a Dalit Christian Praxis!

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## **This is not Another Nirbhaya**

*- Harshali Nagrale\**

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India recorded an average of 87 rape cases every day in 2019 and 4,05,861 cases of crimes against women during the year - a rise of over seven per cent from 2018. Out of the total 32,033 reported rape cases in the year, 11 per cent were from the Dalit community (NCRB report, 2019). Out of this, states such as UP and Rajasthan account for the highest number of cases of caste-based violence. In 2019, with 11,829 cases, Uttar Pradesh saw the highest number of cases of crime against Dalits, followed by Rajasthan with 6,794 cases, and 6,544 cases in Bihar. (NCRB report, 2019) Beyond the cold statistics and beyond the numbers lies the brutal reality they point to - about how unsafe Dalit women are in their own country and how they are often victims of extreme mental as well as physical violence.

The Constitution of India provides for strong laws and affirmative action to safeguard Dalit and tribal populations in the society yet the oppressed communities have to go suffer heinous atrocities. Over a period of time, the forms of sexual violence on Dalit and Adivasi women have not changed and the brutality of crime has even intensified. Different forms of atrocities are taking place in a scenario where violence is highly normalized by both male and female members of the upper castes. The common forms of violence happen on marginalised women where they are insulted in public, sexually exploited, sexually harassed, tonsured in public, beaten, insulted, forced to wear garlands made with sandals and even have their faces blackened (a symbol of shame in Hindu caste society) and are forcefully marched around the village. The caste entrenched society is so rigid and shameful that no one speaks against such openly committed crimes. In such a crime the entire people in the village are involved but yet the system is so silent. This shows how caste-based atrocities are normalized in our society. The violence against Dalit

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women has not even been challenged by any arm of the Judiciary. In India states like Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan have seen a rise in sexual violence as a tool of oppression against Dalit communities.

The Savarana feminists in India speak a lot about equality and equal rights for everyone; then why are they being so caste-blind now? Death threats, heinous and brutal crimes such as rapes, and acid attacks, all aimed against Dalit women have also become very common nowadays. The question which needs to be thought deeper is what makes the “So-Called” upper caste men to commit such horrifying crimes and what makes the Savarna women to not speak against such crimes happening against other women? What makes the men commit such brutal crimes? Who gives them such power and where this power is coming from? Are they not afraid of the Constitution?

Of all the reported rape cases in Uttar Pradesh, 18 per cent victims are Dalit women, almost double of that in Rajasthan (9 per cent) (IndiaToday,2020). The entire data shows how the violence against women has increased in these 2 years and specifically violence against Dalit women. With the data, we also want to know how much the current government has worked on this data to improve the safety of the women in the country and to stop the caste-based atrocities unleashed on them. It is this situation of caste-based normalised violence that recently emboldened a few upper caste men to kill 19-year-old Dalit woman after brutally gangraping her.

There is a different aspect to consider when it comes to these crimes. When a woman from a dominant caste gets raped the justice system works differently under the power of masculinity. She gets media coverage, Mahila Aayog comes on the street and the justice system gets pressured into giving her justice. However, in the case of a Dalit woman it works completely differently. The discrimination starts as early as the stage of filing the complaint in the police station. It takes days/weeks/months to file a rape complaint. And even if, after a lot of persistent effort, they succeed in registering the case, the entire family along with the victim-survivor are beaten up and tortured to get them to withdraw the case. Pieces of evidence are either destroyed or they are kept from reaching the court. The politics of caste is played completely differently and hence the rape case of Manisha is caste-based violence and it is important to take this case forward as a caste-based rape and

murder. Many of the “So-called upper caste” feminist writers and celebrities tweeted that this was another Nirbhaya. But actually, it was not another Nirbhaya. This is not merely the rape and murder of a woman. The victim is a Dalit Woman. Let us that get straight; she is a Dalit woman. The fact is that these issues are not taught or conveyed the way they ought to be because the whole history is misinterpreted because it is written by people from dominant castes. It is a history of the upper-caste privileged population.

The caste identity of Dalit women is important because the justice system works like that towards them. If one sees the brutality of the case and the way the victim was treated in terms of hospital facilities, the way her family members were treated when they were asking for her dead body - the system was so rigid that her body was burnt without her parents being informed so as to completely destroy the evidence. Now the press trust of India is saying that the rape never happened. The second post mortem was not even done to cross-check the case and the body was also ev burnt. How can a system behave so inhumanly? How can your dominating caste be so fearless even before the constitution of the land? Is this because the entire system is owned by the privileged castes? These acts underscore the need to think deeper. This is not the first heinous atrocity against a Dalit where justice has taken so long and the evidence has been destroyed.

On 29 September 2006, four members of a Dalit family were murdered in Khairlanji, a village of fewer than two hundred families in Bhandara district of Maharashtra, not far from Nagpur city. Mrs. Bhotmange (40) and her daughter Priya (name changed) (17) were stripped, battered, paraded naked, raped several times and killed by a Hindu mob led by men of the Kunabi-Maratha caste, goaded on by the entire village. The eldest son (21) and youngest son (19) were also tortured and murdered for trying to save their mother and sister. There was not a single piece of cloth on their bodies. There were wounds on the bodies. The brothers did not have a single piece of cloth on their bodies. they had been similarly beaten. The mother's blouse was torn. Her petticoat was also torn. She had also been severely beaten. Even her skull was broken. Her brain had spilt out from it. She had even lost one eye. Only Mr Bhotmange, survived, watching the lynching and rape hiding behind a bush. (Navayana, 2006). It took years to get justice. The entire



family died and recently in 2017 the father also died and justice has not yet been delivered to them. What can one say about such a pathetic justice system?

Another incident of similar barbarity took place in Andhra Pradesh. The dominant caste groups of the village, the Reddys and the Kapus, and the Dalits have been vying against and accusing each other of several small crimes prior to this incident. This led to a social boycott of the Dalits enforced by the Reddys and Kapus, which disallowed them from entering the ‘upper caste locality’ and from working in their fields. In about a month, on August 6th, this escalated into a full-blown massacre of 8 Dalits (7 Malas and 1 Madiga) in broad daylight by Reddy and Kapu mobs from Tsundur, Valiveru, Modukuru and Munnangivaripalem. (FII, 2019).

While the caste system has been formally abolished under the Indian Constitution, according to official statistics every eighteen minutes a crime is committed on a Dalit. The gouging out of eyes, the hacking off of limbs and being burned alive or stoned to death are routine in the atrocities perpetrated against India’s 170 million Dalits. What drives people to commit such inhuman crimes?

Of all crimes committed against the members of the Scheduled Castes, the most numerous are against Dalit women—as the 2016 National Crime Records Bureau’s figures, the last data released nationally, show. Assaults on SC women to outrage their modesty, rapes, attempts to commit rapes and insults to the modesty of SC women comprise the lion’s share of all cases against Dalits. Dalit women continue to be targeted because they are seen as the weakest of the weak.

The masculine power which is enjoyed by the so-called upper caste man comes out of the caste hierarchy created by the Brahmanical structure and this gives them the freedom which to treat Dalit women as their sex objects. This structure has made the Savarna women voiceless and inhuman too. Even they have forgotten the womanhood within them. Therefore, feminism in India needs to be restructured. It is meaningless if the women from oppressed communities are not heard equally and claim space. Your feminism isn’t feminism if it isn’t inclusive of Dalit and other oppressed communities’ women, because then it’s just upper-caste privilege. When generation after generation

exploit Dalit women as if they are free property, in a land where Dalit women have to spend their whole life without self-respect, with no dignity of life and as a slave to serve the dominant caste, it is a crime to be born a Dalit woman, it is a crime to belong to the system which is made and named by the dominant caste with the sole aim of obtaining their pleasure on the bodies of the lower caste women.

In 1989 The Constitution amended the Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act to protect the broken classes from such bloodthirsty, brutal, murderous crimes happening against them. Yet, crimes against Dalit women are still the same, with only the pattern having changed. The straitjacket of caste in the mind of the upper caste is still the same. Therefore, it is important not only to have stronger laws but the government has to work on the issue with different strategies so as to motivate individuals to create a casteless society. But, for all this to happen the oppressed communities need to come into power. The Dalit, Adivasi women, transgender and queer people must take up the leadership because they are their own best representatives. Such spaces also need to be created through stronger acts and laws so that such crimes can at least be reduced to a major extent in society. Political parties need to give special reservations for women and queer people so that they too can get opportunities from the primary stage to come up in the higher decision-making bodies. But the irony is that most of the parties in India are headed by the upper caste males and they do not want to share their power with women. To bring out the voices of the people from the most marginalized section of the society, India needs free, unbiased, questioning journalism even more as it faces multiple crises. Therefore, this is the time the women, queer people, men, Dalits, Adivasi and all other oppressed communities need to come together. The system needs a strong pushback wave and power of resistance to reconstruct this society so that individuals from all castes and genders can live in safety. It is time to say enough is enough to the slavery and brutal violence the oppressed women have gone through. We the Dalit, Adivasi- women, transgender and queer are the ones who can free ourselves from this Brahmanical slavery of suppression but the tragedy is that hardly any one yells out in protest.

Dalit women's lives matter. And they have a very long way to go.

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# Vulnerability and the Act of Protest and Resistance Power of Dalit Women: Formulation of Life Affirming Dalit Theology

-Nivedha\* and Kanimuthu Selvi†

## Introduction:

Dalit women are both vulnerable and powerful in Indian society. This article deals with the oppression of the Dalit women in the society of India by analyzing the patriarchal oppression and discrimination on the basis of gender, caste and class; their act of protest and resistance through their writings and movements; government policies for the empowerment of Dalit Women in India and the formulation of life affirming theology for affirming the dignity of Dalit Women in Christian perspective.

## Significance of the term “Dalit”:

In the late Sixties & Seventies, vibrant mass movements of the oppressed castes adopted the term “Dalit”, which may derive from Sanskrit root verb “Dal.” The verb “Dal” means broken down, split into, downtrodden, etc which expresses their pathos. The term “Dalit,” itself denies the notions of purity and pollution; karma which is used to justify the caste hierarchy and exclusion; rejects the term Harijan, divine sanction and legitimization of the caste system. The term rejects the whole degrading hierarchical and patriarchal caste system.<sup>1</sup>

## Caste, Gender and Class:

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, considered the Hindu Caste System as a pyramid of earthen pots set one on top of another. The Dalit community

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<sup>1</sup> Jahnvi Andharia and Anandi Collective, “The Dalit Women’s movement in India: Dalit Mahila Samiti” accessed on 19 Nov2020, [www.5-6154479670340354533.pdf](http://www.5-6154479670340354533.pdf).

is at the very bottom crushed into powder, and furthermore, Dalit women are placed below Dalit men, and as such are powdered into even finer particles.<sup>2</sup> Uma Chakravarthi, a feminist historian clearly explains Ambedkar's perspective on the caste system in her recent work, "Gendering Caste through the feminist lens," in which she defines caste as a system of graded inequality in which castes are arranged according to an ascending scale of reverence and a descending scale of contempt.<sup>3</sup>

Ruth Manorama, Dalit Womanist activist, observes that Dalit Women in India suffer from at least three levels of alienation and oppression: gender as a result of patriarchy, caste, from belonging to the lowest caste, 'the untouchables,' and class from being from the poorest and one of the most marginalized communities in India. They are categorized as "the downtrodden among the downtrodden."<sup>4</sup>

Dalit women are denied their fair share in the socio-economic sphere as well, often being denied just and equal wages, a fair share in economic distribution, maternity benefits, security and protection.

Uma Chakravarthi explains the inter-relationship between caste, gender and class as being linked to the structure of marriage, sexuality and reproduction which is the basis of caste system. Class is a system of production, and caste is a system of production and reproduction and violence happens if there is breach in the patriarchal norms taking forms such as honour killing in situations of inter-caste marriage. Dalit women's independence to choose their life partner is considered an anti-caste phenomenon as inter-caste marriages challenge the community sanctioned marriages, thereby structuring the caste into religion, into minority and finally into community arranged violence against Dalit women asserting their constitutional rights to be independent agents of their own destiny.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Belinda, "Skin: A Site of Pollution becomes a Tool of Liberation," *Religion and Society* 58/1 & 2 (March-June, 2013): 43.

<sup>3</sup> Jahnvi Andharia and Anandi Collective, "The Dalit Women's movement in India: Dalit Mahila Samiti", accessed on 19 Nov 2020, [www.5-6154479670340354533.pdf](http://www.5-6154479670340354533.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Ruth Manorama, "Dalit Women: Downtrodden among the Downtrodden" in *Women's Studies in India: A Reader* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2008), 2.

<sup>5</sup> Uma Chakravarti, "Thinking about Caste: An Autobiographical Journey," in *Caste and Gender in Contemporary India: Power, Privilege and Politics*, edited by Supurna Banerjee and Nandini Ghosh (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), 33.

## Violence and Atrocities against Dalit Women:

Dalit women experience struggle for their survival and justice. The principles of ‘high and low,’ ‘purity and pollution’ restrict the change of the status of the Dalit women. In one telling incident, for example, dominant caste villagers thrashed and killed an 8-month pregnant Dalit woman for touching a bucket in Uttar Pradesh.

The Indian Express reports that Savitri Devi, a resident of Khetalpur Bhansoli village earned meagre income of Rs. 100 per month by clearing trash from outside the homes of five upper-caste families in her village. According to witnesses, while she was doing her job on October 18, 2017, she lost balance and touched a bucket that was placed outside the house of another woman named Anju who belonged to the dominant caste. Anju, punched her in her pregnant belly for causing defilement of the bucket. She banged her head against the wall, then her son Rohit also assaulted Savitri. Savitri’s husband lodged a complaint with the police but they did not register it right away. It was only two days later after visiting the locality and speaking to eye-witnesses that they registered the complaint. Her husband took her to hospital but they returned without obtaining a proper diagnosis. On October 21, she fainted and was rushed into the same district hospital which had sent her away earlier. She was declared brought dead. The criminals absconded, and so far no action has been taken against them.<sup>6</sup>

The act of touching a bucket on the part of an “untouchable” Dalit woman was thus construed as having defiled the bucket, as she belonged to Dalit community but when it came to violence against her, she became touchable. This is how women and men of the dominant castes control the bodies of Dalit women.

In October 2020, *NCC Review*, Anupama Hial’s article “Stand Up, Stand Out and Make a Difference...!” clearly explained the Hathras gang rape case, the violence against a Dalit Woman and the

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<sup>6</sup> “Upper Caste Villagers Thrash And Kill 8-Month Pregnant Dalit Woman For Touching And Defiling Bucket,” Huff Post, 26 Oct 2017, accessed on 14 September, 2020, <https://www.huffingtonpost.in/2017/10/26/upper-caste-villagers-thrash-and-kill-8-month-pregnant-dalit-woman-for-touching-and-defiling-bucket-a-23256389/?ncid=other>.

relationship of the dominating caste, gender and class and how they control the body of Dalit women.<sup>7</sup>

Any step taken by Dalit women through the ages to question the system, challenge inequality to change the life situation has resulted in retaliation with abuses such as beating, rape, naked parading, forced prostitution including religiously sanctioned temple prostitution, forced ingestion of excrement, labelling as witches, harassment and murder. The whole community is also implicated in the crime committed by the individual who dared to question the status quo and the punishment meted out takes the form of burning of houses, destruction of properties, valuables, crops etc. Dalit women thus live out their whole lives with fear and under perennial threat.<sup>8</sup>

### **Autonomous SC Women's Organizations:**

The National Federation of Dalit Women (NFDW), formed on 11 August 1995, has forced women's movements in India to address the caste issue. Dalit feminists have articulated the three-fold oppression of Dalit women as: Dalit community being oppressed by the dominant caste community; Women facing patriarchal oppression including from men of their own castes.

The National Federation of Dalit Women was launched by Dalit Women themselves and committed itself to transforming the lives of Dalit Women through assisting in taking legal action against caste-based atrocities, political empowerment of Dalit Women, economic empowerment and building confidence and leadership skills.

The various other organizations are Dalit Mahila Sanghatana, which is the women's wing of the Bharatiya Republican Party and the Bahujan Mahila Sangh. The Christi Mahila Sangharsh Sanghatana, an organization of Dalit Christian Women was established in 1997.

<sup>7</sup> Anupama Hial, "Stand Up, Stand Out and Make a Difference," NCCI Review, Oct 2020, accessed on 13 Nov 2020, [www.1605890186186-m.NCCReview-October-2020-corrected.pdf](http://www.1605890186186-m.NCCReview-October-2020-corrected.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> Ruth Manorama, "Dalit Women-Downtrodden of the downtrodden," accessed on 19 Nov 2020, [www.dalitwomen-downtroddenofthedowntrodden.com](http://www.dalitwomen-downtroddenofthedowntrodden.com).

## **Dalit Patriarchy:**

Gopal Guru, in the article “Dalit Women Talk Differently” explains the reasons for the need of Dalit Women to speak for themselves and that these constitute both internal and external factors. Dalit Women assert that the representation of their issues by non-SC women is not completely valid or authentic. The caste factor makes sexual violence against Dalit Women more severe in intensity and magnitude. It is not only caste and class identity, but also one’s gender positioning, that decides the validating of an event. Dalit men also oppress, discriminate against, dominate and abuse Dalit Women. The experience of Dalit women shows that local resistance within the Dalit Community is important.<sup>9</sup>

## **Dalit Christian Literature: Bama**

Bama is a Dalit Christian writer born in 1957, at Pudupatti in Tamil Nadu. Her works are Karukku, Sangati, Kisumbukkaran, Vanmam, Oru Thathavum Erumayum, Kondattam and Manushi in Tamil. She focuses on themes related to caste and social discrimination.

In Sangati, she brings out the elements which liberate the Dalit Community. In her community, the sense of sisterhood across generations gives them the strength to fight against the oppression of the dominant castes, and moral wisdom passes from one generation to another through their experiences.<sup>10</sup>

## **Government Policies and Schemes for the Empowerment of Dalit Community:**

These comprise:

*Educational Empowerment Schemes* such as Post Matric scholarships, Pre-Matriculation Scholarship for children of those parents who are engaged in unclean occupations, Babu Jagjivan Ram Chhatrawas Yojana for providing hostel facilities for students, free coaching for

<sup>9</sup> Rabindra Kumar, *Dalit Exclusion and Subordination* (New Delhi: Rawat, 2013), 135-136.

<sup>10</sup> Shiluina Jamir, “Reading Bama’s Sangati: Autoethnography as an Imaginative Resource for Christian Moral Discernment,” *Religion and Society* 63/2 (April, 2018): 23.



students, merit upgrade of students, Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowships for research students, National Overseas scholarships; *Schemes for Economic Empowerment*, such as Special Central Assistance to SC sub-plan, Assistance to State Scheduled Caste Development Corporations, National Scheduled Caste Finance and Development Corporations, National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporations; *Social Empowerment Schemes* such as Central Assistance to Voluntary organizations, working for the Welfare of Scheduled Caste, National Commissions for Scheduled Castes.<sup>11</sup>

### **Life Affirming Dalit Theology: Dalit Christology**

In A.P. Nirmal's perspective, Jesus is Dalit. He shares the common experiences of being rejected, mocked, hated and treated with contempt. Bishop Azariah clearly points out that Jesus encounters the experiences of a Dalit. These experiences have to be articulated for the formulation of a life affirming Dalit Theology.

Dalit Theologians like Maria Arul Raja and Faustina present Jesus Christ as a radical revolutionary who promises to set the oppressed free. Jesus Christ treats all human beings with equal dignity. We have to interpret Jesus in the perspective of socio-economic, political and religious factors where he is against the oppressive structures in society. The Dalit community should protest and resist all forms of violence and atrocities directed against them.<sup>12</sup>

Jesus is a radical resister, Jesus as a carpenter rebelled against the discriminatory and dominating structures of the society of his day. He recognized and treated women and children with dignity and included all those who are excluded from the community, into his reign of God. He cleansed the temple, and fought against the unethical praxis of corruption in their lives. Jesus of Nazareth, as radical resister, challenges the dominating structures of society. He empowers the Dalit community to stand for their rights. He fights for the formation of

<sup>11</sup> Rabindra Kumar, *Dalit Exclusion and Subordination*, 32-42.

<sup>12</sup> Anderson H.M. Jeremiah, "Exploring New Facets of Dalit Christology: Critical Interaction with J.D. Crossan's portrayal of the Historical Jesus," in *Dalit Theology: In the Twenty First Century* edited by Sathianathan Clarke, Deenabandhu Manchala and Philip Vinod Peacock (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 152-153.

an egalitarian society. He proposes counter culture that challenges any oppressive, exploitative, and discriminatory socio-economic and political institutions. He liberates those who are oppressed in the society. He affirms the dignity of Dalit women, he promises liberation of Dalit women from the evil structures of the patriarchal, discriminatory and dominating society. He encourages the Dalit Women to resist the marginalizing and dehumanizing forces in Indian society such as discrimination, and oppression of Dalit women on the basis of caste, gender and class which are interlinked to each other.<sup>13</sup>

### **Egalitarian Society:**

Galatians 3:28, explicitly declares that all are equal. All are created in the image of God. Ambedkar and Jesus Christ envision an egalitarian Indian society, where all citizens of India experience liberty, equality, fraternity and freedom to live with dignity and to struggle against discrimination, exploitation and injustice.

### **Ekklesia:**

This entails a discipleship of all equals. Dalit Theology within the ekklesia aims to eliminate discrimination on the basis of caste, gender and class, etc. and on the other hand challenges the society outside the ekklesia to ensure affirmative reservation for the Dalit Christians under the constitutional provisions for Scheduled Caste groups.<sup>14</sup> Dalit Christian Women formed a network aimed at ending discrimination in society and the Church on Feb 13 in Bengaluru to set up a new national level organization.<sup>15</sup>

### **Conclusion:**

Dalit women are alienated and oppressed in a threefold way: on the basis of caste, gender and class. They are the downtrodden among the downtrodden. They struggle for their survival and to live with dignity.

<sup>13</sup> Anderson H.M.Jeremiah, *Dalit Theology: In the Twenty First Century*, 161.

<sup>14</sup> Anderson H.M.Jeremiah, *Dalit Theology: In the Twenty First Century*, 130-131.

<sup>15</sup> Ritu Sharma, "Christian Dalit Women Stand up for their Rights," UCA News, 7 March 2017, accessed on 19 November 2020, <https://www.ucanews.com/news/christian-dalitwomen-stand-up-for-their-rights/78478>.

They are vulnerable and they participate in movements to protest and gain the power to resistance and to fight against the dominating discriminatory and oppressive structures of society. Jesus Christ and Ambedkar envision the formation of an egalitarian society. Jesus Christ, a radical resister, motivates Dalit women to struggle against the forces and structures that oppress and marginalize them. He restores dignity to Dalit women and declares that they are created in the image of God.



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## Covid-19 and its Implications for Women

- Satvasheela Pandhare Bhonsle\*

### Introduction

History bears testimony to the fact that women are always the most severe sufferers in any pandemic. So, for example, in the Spanish flu pandemic more women died than men.<sup>1</sup> Being the victims of poverty and undernourishment, the immunity of the children and women in India too, is generally weak and thus in India, women are the most unfortunate group that can get infected more quickly. Along with the physical challenges that any pandemic brings, women face even psychological and economical challenges that further make their sufferings graver.

This article is an attempt to investigate these realities further in the context of Covid-19. The findings are based on the field experience of some of the female nurses/health workers and social workers working in West Bengal as well as in Aurangabad and Sangli districts of Maharashtra. The presenter is grateful to them for sharing their experiences, which has helped to enhance this article.

### Challenges of Women in Healthcare

It is a known fact that in the field of nursing there are more women than men. The ratio of male to female nurses is 20:80 in India. Nevertheless, male nurses are mostly concentrated in technical departments; whereas female nurses mostly are assigned to do the 'dirty' work by the bedside.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup><https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/an-unwanted-shipment-the-indian-experience-of-the-1918-spanish-flu/articleshow/74963051.cms?from=mdr> (accessed on 25 July 2020).

<sup>2</sup>Vaisnaja Roy, "Through a high-skill job, nursing remains low-paid and stigmatized: A look at the gender and caste politics that vex the nursing profession", *The Hindu* (Kolkata) (26 July, 2020).

Due to the fact that it is a poorly paid profession, the field of nursing is not as attractive as many others. Hence, even in normal times the nurse-patient ratio in India is 1:20 over against the international norm of 1:4. Nevertheless, the ratio is toppled down very badly during the pandemic. For instance, in Maharashtra, the State which has the highest number of Covid-19 patients, the nurse-patient ratio is 1:1000, which is well-below the national average.<sup>3</sup>

This makes it quite clear that in such a situation they are overworked. As a safety measure against the spread in the family, health workers, doctors and nurses are forced to stay at the workplace; thus left without emotional and mental support in such a challenging situation. Some of the female nurses working in the government hospitals in Maharashtra, while sharing their on-duty experiences said that they are provided with poor lodging and food. On the contrary the male-doctors are provided the best treatment. In spite of such a gender discrimination that poses a serious challenge to their own health, the nurses continue to serve the Corona positive patients with sincerity and hard work.

In the meantime, many of them acquired the infection due to weak immunity and negligence. Along with them many found their family members also to have contracted the infection; thus, the chain of Corona continues further. Vaishna Roy rightly suggests that only improving working conditions can improve the worker's condition.<sup>4</sup>

In a patriarchal society like India, women's sufferings have rather become more severe during the pandemic. A newly married nurse working in Sangli, explained that when she goes home after two weeks, she could see unwelcoming gestures on the faces of other members of her family. On returning home, she is isolated and there is no interaction with the family members. Thus, in a new house, with new home people around she lives the life of a stranger. While she receives readymade food to eat, she also cannot ignore the unpleasant expressions of the other women in the family, who also work hard to make provisions for the whole family.

<sup>3</sup> Lalita Panicker, "Valuing Nursing can transform Healthcare", available at <https://www.hindustantimes.com/columns/valuing-nursing-can-transform-health-care/story-7Ivc4wuNXQ554iTO78aj7K.html> (accessed on 26 July 2020).

<sup>4</sup> "Through a high-skill job, nursing remains low-paid and stigmatized: A look at the gender and caste politics that vex the nursing profession"...

Thus, the pandemic has posed various challenges to the life of already suffering womenfolk in India.

### **Vulnerability of Women**

The virus does not discriminate on the basis of gender. However, as a matter of fact women are more vulnerable to any sickness. Hence, it is important to consider the challenges they face.

In India women have been held responsible for holding families and societies together. Right from childhood they are taught to serve the elders and the men and children in the family. With all the domestic works women also fulfil their responsibilities at the workplace sincerely. Thus, their energies are fully consumed. Due to the excessive demand for their availability in the family and at the workplace, they hardly get time to take care of themselves and as a result they tend to ignore themselves. In some cases, the women in orthodox patriarchal families do not find space for their choices of food. As a matter of fact, they do not consider it as important that they should eat well as the men in the family. Consequently, they lack a strong immune system to fight even common infections, leave alone the deadly Coronavirus. In Indian families, women are the first caregivers at home to the sick. Hence, it is important that their health is given more attention during crucial times such as the present one.

However, women's vulnerability cannot be determined by physical health only. Women are suffering at different levels.

The lockdown period or the isolation period to combat Covid-19 is the most challenging for the women and the girls in the family. Since all the family members are confined to the house, the household work is increased because men in the family do not take up an equal share of the responsibilities for household work.

While the middle-class and high-class women struggle to choose a recipe every morning, women from poor families struggle to find enough food in the house for the family. Women in different sections of the society struggle differently. They are alone in making decisions as well as in implementing the same; whereas in some families they struggle alone to provide for their hungry children.

Many women live in fear because of the men in the family who are in the grip of various addictions. A domestic worker, who resumed work after the first lockdown was lifted in West Bengal, shared her concern that her daughter is not safe at home in the presence of her alcoholic husband who has no option but to stay at home during this period. The daughter cannot accompany her mother as she has to protect the house from the drunkard husband. Thus, they both – the mother and daughter - continue to live under constant threat.

Women have become more vulnerable also because of the new normal, ‘work from home’. The ‘work from home’ system is rather demanding, given the uncertain working hours, untimely schedules of the meetings, frequent calling, pressure for the completion of the daily tasks and so on. Women and men have grievances about the online job culture because it challenges their physical and mental health. The situation of the women becomes even more serious due to the expectations of family members. *‘It is too hectic with back to back meetings across the globe and at difficult timelines. Relationships are tested during such times. I receive unpleasant gestures from my mother-in-law, for not helping her to cook. I am not able to have meals together with other family members and have a hearty time with the loved ones. No one in the family bothers about my situation’*, explains one such struggling friend.

Implication of ‘Social Distancing’ and ‘Lockdown’ for Indian Women  
Indian society is divided into castes, which sets social boundaries for the different caste groups. The social norms are more stringent for the lower castes and the Dalits in India. According to these laws as laid down by the Hindu society, Dalits are forced to live in isolation for the fear of contaminating others, for they are engaged in what are considered ‘dirty’ jobs in the society. Hence, the term ‘social distancing’ is not new to Indians. Since the time the expression began being used in the context of Covid-19 to suggest a helpful measure to prevent the infection, some of us found ourselves uneasy about it. Having realized the negative connotation of this term in the Indian context, some have suggested an alternative term ‘Physical Distancing’ in its place.

Nevertheless, none of these terms are unfamiliar to Indians. Dalits have been living an isolated life in Indian society while continually cleaning and protecting the homes of the upper castes.

The term ‘social distancing’ and ‘lockdown’ are very closely related to Indian women especially during the time when they menstruate. The taboo, that they are ‘unclean’ during this period, is placed on them by the Hindu scriptures. Approximately 80% (according to 2011 Census) of the Indian population is Hindu. Menstruating women are asked to live in isolation, even their thoughts are considered as unclean because of menstruation. Hence, women are directed not to converse with men in the family.<sup>5</sup> Thus, isolation and abandonment are only reaffirmed in case of Indian women in the context of Covid-19.

Women and Dalits share the experience of isolation and abandonment from the casteist and patriarchal Hindu society. In the challenging situation as that of today, they are looked down upon with suspicion and hatred. For instance, Yogi Adityanath, the *Hindūtvā* icon has said that most of the migrants, who returned to Uttar Pradesh, are Dalits.<sup>6</sup> This makes the migrants doubly insecure – firstly because of the suspicion that they are the carriers of the virus and secondly because they are untouchables. Thus a social stigma is strongly attached to Dalits.

The Indian government launched the National Menstrual Hygiene Scheme in the year 2014 with the purpose of promoting menstrual hygiene among adolescent girls in rural areas. The self-help groups were empowered to make sanitary napkins. Thus, the availability of sanitary napkins was made easily possible.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, during the suddenly announced lockdown Indian women suffered from the sudden scarcity of sanitary napkins. Girls and women from poorer backgrounds could not afford high cost of the regular sanitary pad since many of them were already jobless. They were left to choose unhygienic alternatives in place of quality sanitary napkins. This situation poses a serious question to the implementation of the scheme that the government launched with the aim of safeguarding women’s health.

<sup>5</sup> Manusmriti 4.47; 4.208; 5.66; 5.108, available at <https://archive.org/details/ManuSmriti201601> (27/7/2020).

<sup>6</sup> *The Hindu* (26 May 2020).

<sup>7</sup> <https://thewire.in/women/why-do-government-efforts-to-ensure-menstrual-hygiene-focus-on-sanitary-napkins> (12 August 2020).



The report of the Menstrual Health Alliance India mentions that women living in small houses find it difficult to use washroom and dispose of sanitary napkins whenever they need, with men being around all the time.<sup>8</sup>

### **Increase in Violence Against Women During the Lockdown**

Women's empowerment as well as women's safety is a debatable issue in India. Women find themselves too vulnerable to fight against the injustice meted out to them, due to the weak legal system. Sadly India has become notorious in the eyes of the world community for an ever increasing number of rapes and murders.

In a society like that of India, women not only suffer isolation due to casteism but also ill-treatment at home from husbands. In the present situation when social distancing and quarantine are compulsory the violence against women has reached unusually high levels. The National Commission for Women reports that it has received numerous complaints against domestic violence across the country during the lockdown.<sup>9</sup>

The quiet streets and colonies have proven to be most conducive places for violence against women. Even homes have proven to be dangerous places for girls and women during lockdown. Sexual crimes against women have increased in the lockdown period. Minor girls are raped and end up becoming asymptomatic carriers of the virus,. A 20-year-old girl in Rajkot, who was raped by a married man, tested positive and further infected some police officials who helped her with legal redress. Another minor girl was raped at home, by her uncle who happened to be a police constable. Dowry deaths, rapes, molestations, domestic violence have been increased during the lockdown.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> See *The Hindu* (28 May, 2020).

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.deccanherald.com/national/domestic-violence-on-rise-in-lockdown-period-ncw-826498.html> (3 August 2020).

<sup>10</sup> Times of India (26 June 2020); <https://epaper.tribuneindia.com/2683227/Jalandhar-Edition/JLE-23-May-2020#page/4/2>; <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/haryana/66-rapes-142-molestations-rise-in-dowry-deaths-in-haryana-during-lockdown-88882>; *The Hindu* (2 April 2020); Times of India (27 May 2020).

One of the stakeholders working for children's welfare informs that the cases of minor girl rapes have increasing over the period of three months. These girls are being made targets of the lust of the men, who now lack access to brothels. Mostly the girls are raped by known males – either by neighbours or by members of their own family.

The legal system of India indirectly nurtures violence against women and contributes to keeping women vulnerable. Delay in giving justice makes the victims even more vulnerable to the trauma of violence.

### **Economic Challenges of Women**

Dalit families suffer from poverty and starvation. When the frequent use of soap and hand-washing is insisted upon to fight with the infection, they don't have the conveniences needed to comply with the instructions. With their limited income, they are often tossed into the situation of having to choose between soap and food for the family.<sup>11</sup> Thus they continue to live under unhygienic conditions. Most villages lack running water, especially in the Dalit *Bastis* where their homes are, and they have to go far to fetch the water. In some *Bastis*, the water supply is not regular. The public distribution system is generally very weak in the Dalit colonies. It is usually only after long-drawn struggles that the Dalits get basic facilities like water, electricity and roads. These realities become roadblocks on their path to surviving the pandemic.

Dalit women, like other women have lost jobs during the lockdowns. In most of the Dalit families, women are the bread-winners. Since they do not have an income source or assurance of employment, money lenders are now hesitant to lend them money because of the fear that the money would not be returned. Thus, they are left alone in their struggle for survival.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/rural-india-s-covid-19-challenge-low-access-to-soap-and-water-11587375522654.html> (accessed on 2/8/2020)

<sup>12</sup> See Subhajit Naskar, "The Gendered Impact Of Coronavirus Pandemic In India", available at <https://www.outlookindia.com/website/story/india-news-opinion-the-gendered-impact-of-coronavirus-pandemic-in-india/350804> (accessed on 27 July 2020).

The most affected group of women in this pandemic is that of the Sex Workers. Because of the fear of infection, the business is badly affected resulting in their incomes drying up. The community workers in West Bengal report that in order to raise money to feed their children, some have started receiving only known and regular clients, who can be trusted to follow sanitation rules.

The pandemic has challenged all the business sectors, spurring all kinds of innovative practices in the quest to resume services for the customers. The sex-working community is not an exception to this. Many sex-workers are now making themselves available for services like phone-sex, for which they take advance payment via Google Pay.<sup>13</sup>

Social workers working in Maharashtra and in West Bengal report that there has been an increase in the number of marriages of minors. Poor parents see the lockdown as a suitable time when they do not have to incur heavy expenses for getting their daughters married. A Priest working in the rural region of Maharashtra explained that on the request of such parents, he has sometimes officiated at up to three marriages a day. Whenever he shows reluctance to solemnize such instant marriages, the parents justify their decision by referring to needs such as having to care for sick grandparents or parents at home, or to money problems, etc. Such marriages usually take place early in the morning in a very simple way so as not to attract the attention of the authorities 'This phenomenon can be observed in West Bengal as well,' informs the social worker. The girls are usually given in marriage to close relatives in order to avoid future economic challenges.

### **Struggles of the Female Migrant Labourers During Lockdown**

While it is true that Covid-19 has posed serious economic challenges for the world as a whole, it has particularly hit India hard because it has hundreds of millions of daily wage workers and migrant workers who are very badly affected. The national lockdown was declared in March

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<sup>13</sup><https://www.livemint.com/mint-lounge/features/how-sex-workers-are-using-technology-to-service-clients-during-the-lockdown-11590152476385.html> (9 July 2020).

2020, and with their jobs gone, many migrant workers started returning to their homes far away. These journeys have proven to be extremely challenging with limited food and water on the way.

All over the length and breadth of the nation, a huge number of migrant women were seen travelling back along with their children. They could not satisfy their own hunger and thirst before providing for their children. Some died on the way due to starvation and dehydration in the hot weather in May.<sup>14</sup>

In different parts of India, pregnant women, who were walking because of the lack of transport, gave birth to children on the roadside in the most unhygienic conditions and without proper assistance. After barely taking rest, they resumed their journey carrying their new born infants, trudging on foot, while attempting to protect them. It is because of lack of income that they had to decide to travel back home. The plight of these courageous sisters cries out for the establishment of a system that takes responsibility for vulnerable groups caught in calamities of this kind.

## Conclusion

Women play an important role in society. While on the one hand their presence in various realms have proven to be more effective, they, on the other hand, face various challenges. In the context of Covid-19, their suffering has intensified further. This poses a serious challenge for policy makers at different levels and also for families. Their plight in an extremely challenging situation such as that of a pandemic calls for committed, passionate and transparent leadership at the administrative level as well as in the family.



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<sup>14</sup> *Times of India* (27 May 2020).

## BIBLE STUDY

### Rape Narratives in the Old Testament: Noticing the Unnoticed Offenders

*- Havilah Dharamraj\* and Francis Mathew†*

In an episode of rape, the rapist is not necessarily the (only) villain. Strangely, and largely unnoticed, “third parties” are capable of victimization that can well exceed the trauma caused by a rape perpetrator. Let us demonstrate the peculiar truth of this through three rape narratives in the Old Testament—three typical “texts of terror.”

2 Sam 13 tells the story of David’s son Amnon, a prince in the line of succession to the throne. Amnon is seized with a desire for Tamar, his half-sister. It is significant to the story that Tamar is the sister of another of David’s sons—Absalom, also a potential political heir. Faking illness, Amnon tricks his father into sending the unsuspecting Tamar to his home to care for him. He rapes her and then throws her out into the streets of Jerusalem. Absalom takes her in but neither he nor David take any immediate action against Amnon.

Judge 19 is set in pre-monarchic Israel, and relates the incidents that befall a Levite and his concubine-wife. Travelling back home from her father’s place, they stop for the night in Gibeah and accept the offer to lodge in the home of a local resident. It turns into a night of horror. The house is surrounded by depraved men; the concubine gets gang-raped; the next morning, the Levite hastily leaves the city, with the concubine loaded on his donkey.

In Gen 34, Dinah the daughter of the patriarch Jacob, goes out to visit the city of Shechem near which her family has recently settled. Before

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the day ends, she is raped by the prince of the city, also called Shechem, and is detained in the palace. In the days that follow, Shechem and his father Hamor meet Dinah's family to ask for her hand in marriage. The negotiations appear successful, but Dinah's brothers Levi and Simeon turn the tables. They launch a surprise attack on the city. After a spree of slaughtering the residents and looting their homes, they return bringing their sister Dinah with them, supposedly rescued from Shechem's custody.

With that background, let us return to the issue we are examining: that is, the effect of third party action on the victim of rape, particularly as compared to the effect of the action of the rape perpetrator. The rape perpetrator affects his victim in broadly three ways: (i) he inflicts coercive sex on the victim, often using trickery to trap her; (ii) the violence may cause the death of the victim; (iii) in the event that the victim survives the violence, the rest of her life is lived out in its shameful shadow. To our surprise, we find that the third parties in the three Old Testament narratives act in ways that mirror the violence and the aftermath of a rape—or even exceed the rapist in these. Let us see how.

First, the perpetrator inflicts coercive sex on the victim. Of the three groups—victim, perpetrator and third parties—it is the perpetrator with whom we associate physical violence. True to this association, the perpetrators in all three stories force themselves on the victim. The Levite's concubine is brutally gang-raped for the sickening length of a whole night; Tamar is overpowered by her half-brother and then flung out of his house; the innocent Dinah is exploited by a powerful prince who then keeps her captive.

However, the third parties are just as capable of—and culpable of—physical violence. At Gibeah, the perverted men of the city are pounding on the door, demanding that the Levite be handed over to them for a night's worth of sexual entertainment. "Bring out the man who came to your house so that we can have sex with him," they yell (Judge 19:22). While the host is doing his best to negotiate with the mob, the exchanges become more heated. The Levite senses that the outcome will not be in his favour. He pre-empt's the threat to himself, his dignity and even his life by throwing his concubine out into the ravenous crowd, which, without a pause turns its vicious attention on the woman. What is worth noting here is that the concubine is acted on through a series of five verbs collected into one sentence (19:25). Of

these, the last three belong to the rapist mob: “they raped her and abused her throughout the night, and at dawn they let her go.” However, the Levite is the agent of the first two verbs: he seized the concubine and sent her out. He has overpowered a resistant woman and thrown her out. Had he not committed his two acts of violence, the woman would not have become the subject of the violent rape enacted over the course of that dreadful night. If the depraved men of Gibeah are culpable of violence, the fact is that the Levite initiates the chain of brutality which the rapists bring to a conclusion.

Violence by the third party is common to the other two narratives as well. After the rape of Tamar, Absalom takes her under his care. At that point he “never said a word to Amnon, either good or bad” but a violent emotion takes root: “he hated Amnon because he had disgraced his sister Tamar” (2 Sam 13:25). His hate leads him to a murderous scheme. Within two years of the rape, Absalom does to Amnon what Amnon did to Tamar. He tricks Amnon to attend a sheep-shearing celebration. During the festive drinking that was part of the occasion, Absalom’s men act on his orders to strike Amnon down. Violence descends on Amnon as unexpectedly as it did two years previously on Tamar. Rather than seek justice for Tamar, Absalom mirrors Amnon in his violent desire, his cold-blooded scheming, and in a heinous crime against a sibling.

This is also the case in the Dinah story. Simeon and Levi, Dinah’s full brothers by their mother Leah, play false to the agreement reached between the families of Jacob and Hamor. As part of the negotiations for Dinah’s hand in marriage, the Shechemites generously agree that all the males in the city will undergo circumcision. What they do not know is that “[b]ecause their sister Dinah had been defiled, Jacob’s sons replied deceitfully as they spoke to Shechem and his father Hamor” (Gen 34:13). The extraordinary demand for circumcision was nested into a plan to bring the city of Shechem to ruin. Three days after the mass circumcision, Levi and Simeon fell upon the city, calculating that it was incapacitated to defend itself. They “attacked the unsuspecting city, killing every male. They put Hamor and his son Shechem to the sword...and looted the city” (34:25-27). One woman’s rape was avenged by wholesale slaughter and destruction totally disproportionate in scale to the offence.

In contrast to the story of the Levite’s concubine, the Tamar and Dinah stories do not have the third party’s violence directed at the rape victim.

Nevertheless, this violence has an unalterably disastrous impact on the rape victim, as we shall see later.

A second point in our correlation of the perpetrator and the third party is that the violence enacted by the perpetrator may result in death. In the three narratives selected, death occurs only in the case of the Levite's concubine. However, here is the peculiar turn: the reader is never told who causes her death. After the night has passed, we see the concubine attempting to return to the house. With her strength failing her at the last minute, she lies collapsed at the doorway. Most poignant is the detail that her hands are poised on the threshold, reaching for the security she nearly regained. Meanwhile, the Levite's concern seems to be to get himself out of Gibeah and to safety as quickly as he can. Unexpectedly, on opening the door, he stumbles over the woman. Whether she is dead at this point of discovery remains ambiguous. At any rate, in the state she is in, he hauls her up onto his donkey and carries on with his journey. Did she die on the way? Was she still breathing when she reached home? We cannot say. All we are told is that when the Levite reached his destination, he took a knife to her and carved her up, "limb by limb" into twelve parts. With the intention of avenging himself on the ordeal the men of Gibeah had caused him, he dispatches these human body parts nationwide—his grisly invitation to a national assembly to decide the fate of Gibeah. But, our interest returns to the concubine. If she indeed survived the journey and was still alive, the Levite murders her. If she was already dead when she reached home, he desecrates her body. In either case, he has turned his levitical skill of dismembering sacrificial animals to the ghastly business of hewing apart his wife. The man who "seized" his concubine and "caused her to go out" into the horror that awaited her (19:25), now "seized" and "sent" her out across the nation, piecemeal (19:29). In this narrative, the savagery of the third party—especially given the relationship with the victim—eclipses that of even the perpetrators.

A third and final observation in our parallel reading of the perpetrator and the third party is this: should the victim survive the violence enacted upon her, the rest of her life is lived out in its shameful shadow. This is the fate of Tamar. She "lived in her brother Absalom's house, a desolate woman" (2 Sam 13:20). The injustice of this irreversibly bleak existence is all the more acute when we recall that there still is a way out. Tamar herself had articulated it to Amnon, moments before he raped her: "No, my brother! Don't force me! Don't do this wicked



thing...Please speak to the king; he will not keep me from being married to you” (13:12-14). There were still persons who could have intervened to reverse the tragic destiny of this princess. Her father David, being the guardian and supreme arbitrator of the law surely knew the clause that applied in her case. The law insisted that a raped virgin, such as Tamar had now become, was not to be denied a respectable life as a wife and, possibly, a mother. The rapist was legally bound to marry her, without the option of future divorce (Deut 22:28-29). How shameful, then, that a princess must suffer injustice lifelong at the hands of a father-king who “was furious” when the report of the rape came to his ears, but was paralyzed by the incapacity to manage his hot-headed sons. (See the Succession Narrative: 2 Sam 13:23-19:8; 1 Kgs 1-2.) Tamar’s brother Absalom could have taken initiative in this matter to secure her future, but he instead acted on securing his honour by executing the one who had sullied it (2 Sam 13:32). What is more, it appears that this incident kindled his political ambition. It is not without reason that the narrator follows the story of the rape of Tamar with the longer story of Absalom’s political rise. Tamar’s misfortune was that her brother was third in line to the throne (1 Chron 3:1), handsome (2 Sam 14:25-26), dazzlingly charismatic (2 Sam 15:6) and self-absorbed. Evidence of the last was literally monumental: “During his lifetime Absalom has taken a pillar and erected it in the King’s Valley as a monument to himself...and it is called Absalom’s Monument to this day” (2 Sam 18:18). Most relevant to our investigation is his ambition—an unscrupulous ambition that would have him seize the throne by trickery and have him hound his own father into a battle he was confident he could not lose (2 Sam 14:28-17:18). Even though he may have affectionately bestowed the name of his desolate sister on his daughter (2 Sam 14:27), Absalom’s self-advancement required that he assassinate Amnon rather than persuade him to become Tamar’s husband. Tamar’s most grievous tragedy was that her brother appears to have conveniently used her rape as a stepping-stone from which to nimbly leap closer to the throne. All this is to point out that, by their inaction on Tamar’s behalf, the third parties in this narrative—David and Absalom—committed Tamar to a lifetime of stigma and shame. Curiously, the rape perpetrator and the third parties reinforce each other in sealing Tamar’s post-rape fate and contribute equally to the permanence of her wretchedness.

In Dinah’s case, her brothers are even more responsible for her unhappy post-rape fate. Here, her rapist Shechem genuinely falls in love with her. His speech, requesting her hand in marriage, is charged

with embarrassingly excessive enthusiasm and is perhaps an index of his remorse at his ill treatment of Dinah: “Let me find favour in your eyes, and I will give you whatever you ask. Make the price for the bride and the gift I am to bring as great as you like, and I’ll pay whatever you ask me. Only give me the young woman as my wife” (Gen 34:11-12). Shechem and his family intend to honour the ancient customs for the rehabilitation and future security of a rape victim (cf. Deut 22:28-29). The negotiations that follow are elaborate, encompassing the possibility of a harmonious trade relationship between the house of Jacob and the city of Shechem. Not only is prince Shechem willing to go to extraordinary lengths to secure the hand of Dinah, but even his father and the male population of his city agree to the unheard of terms and conditions set by Dinah’s brothers. At a time when the children of Jacob were intermarrying with the local residents (see Judah in Gen 38), Dinah would have been honourably married to a Canaanite prince who lacked neither power nor wealth—and who appears to deeply love her. If the story does not end with Shechem and Dinah living “happily ever after,” if she is condemned to a life as desolate as Tamar’s, if she is considered “damaged goods” for the rest of her life—it is because her brothers violently “rescue” her from the custody of a man who was willing to give anything to marry her. Even her father is horrified at their actions, though less out of concern for Dinah’s future, and more out of concern that the Canaanites will retaliate. The brothers Simeon and Levi, however, have only this to say in defence of their actions: “Should [Shechem] have treated our sister like a prostitute?” (34:31). Their words suggest that their honour has been breached. Even if Shechem did treat Dinah “like a prostitute,” his change of heart surely worked in favour of Dinah’s future. Sadly, her future is less important to Simeon and Levi when weighed against the satisfaction of recovering their honour.

We have shown that, in these three Old Testament narratives of rape, the profile of the third party is startlingly similar to that of the perpetrator. First, the third party is capable of violence just as much as the rapist is, and even more. This violence may be directed towards the victim herself (as in the case of the Levite) or towards the perpetrator (as in the case of Absalom, and Simeon and Levi). Just as much as trickery is often the weapon of the rapist in luring his victim, the third party shows a surprising recourse to deceit, as do both Absalom and Dinah’s brothers. The former commits fratricide, and the latter commit a localized genocide, both deploying deception. Secondly, this violence may even result in the death of the rape victim, as perhaps in

the case of the concubine. Thirdly, in the event that the victim survives, her bleak future might well be due to the third party rather than the rapist, as in the case of both Tamar and Dinah.

This negative profiling of the third party seems intended by the narrator. Consider how each text gives extensive space to the crime of the third parties. The telling of Simeon and Levi's massacre covers five verses (Gen. 34:25-29) as opposed to Shechem's rape of Dinah which takes one verse (Gen. 34:2). The Levite's action and disposition towards his concubine are described in three and a half verses (Judg. 19:25a, 27-29), while the act of rape by the unruly mob—heinous as it is—is barely given half a verse (Judg. 19:25b). Similarly, Absalom's reaction and plotting (2 Sam. 13:20-39) have almost equal, if not more, coverage compared to Amnon's scheming and execution of the rape of Tamar (2 Sam. 13:1-17).

It shocks us that a third party can behave like the perpetrator or worse, especially considering that the third party is nearly always a near blood-relative of the rape victim. In the story of Dinah, Simeon and Levi are Dinah's full brothers, and as such, are responsible for seeing her married (cf Gen 24:28-60; Song of Songs 8:8-9). The third parties that act against the welfare of Tamar are her father David and her full brother Absalom. In the story of the concubine, the man who takes a knife to her body is her legal protector.

Why do third parties behave like a perpetrator, caring nothing for the victim? The answer may be contained in one term: self-interest. Absalom's political career is launched from Tamar's rape; Simeon and Levi multiply their wealth because Dinah was violated; the Levite, whose personal honour was damaged at Gibeah, regained it at a national level (Judg 20:1-11) through the gang-rape and death of his concubine.

It is possible, then, that a rape victim can suffer deeply, and even die, at the hands of third parties—her family, her next-door neighbours, her church members, her workplace, her community. As unthinkable as it may seem, the truth appears to be that third parties have the capacity to act in a manner that is shamefully close to that of the rape perpetrator. That is the caution these narratives leave us with: in an incident of rape, the third party, rather than the rapist, can turn out to be the vilest of the villains.



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**Last Date for receiving the duly filled application:**

**D.Th. - 15th January 2021**

**External Studies - 30th November 2020**

**Others - 30th January 2021**

***For Prospectus and Application, please contact:***

**The Principal, The Tamilnadu Theological Seminary, Arasaradi,  
Madurai - 625016, Tel: 91-452-2602352. Fax: 91-452-2601424**

# **Union Biblical Seminary(UBS)**

## **Bibwewadi, Pune**

### **Requires**

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  - ♦ **Associate Professors and**
  - ♦ **Assistant Professors**
- in
- Old Testament,  
Christian Theology,  
Missiology and  
Christian Ministry*

### **Qualification**

DTh/PhD or equivalent in the relevant field

### **Our Mission**

UBS is committed to train, equip, nurture and instil in those called by God, a Christ-like life style, Biblical teaching and holistic formation for becoming servant leaders and scholar saints in the church's mission in the contemporary world.

Please send your application with Resume and all the supporting documents to

**principal@ubs.ac.in and recruit@ubs.ac.in**



## Union Biblical Seminary

**Affiliated to the Senate of Serampore College (University)**

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- Bible-Centered teaching and learning where Christ holds Preeminence
- State of the Art library with online theological resources
- Serving the Indian, Asian, and Global Church since 1953
- 32 strong Core Teaching Faculty, most of them with DTh/PhD from reputed universities
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***Invites applications for the following programmes for 2021-22***

### **BACHELOR OF DIVINITY (4 years)**

**Eligibility:** A Bachelor Degree in any discipline from a recognized university

**MASTER OF THEOLOGY (2 years)** [*Senate of Serampore and Asia Theological Association*] Old Testament, New Testament, Christian Theology, Missiology, and Christian Ministry (Pastoral Counselling)

**Senate MTh Eligibility:** BD from the Senate of Serampore College with an overall grade of B minus, B grade in area/cluster of specialization and one-year ministerial experience for male candidates.

**ATA MTh eligibility:** MDiv from a recognized ATA college with an overall B plus, proficiency in the appropriate language for the field of study (i.e. Hebrew for the OT and Greek for the NT) and one-year ministerial experience.

**DOCTORAL PROGRAMME** [*Senate of Serampore and Asia Theological Association*] Old Testament, New Testament, Christian Theology, and Christian Ministry – Pastoral Counselling

**Senate DTh Eligibility:** MTh from the Senate of Serampore College with a minimum of 'B' grade or equivalent, two years of ministerial experience after MTh and must pass in the Common Entrance Test (CET) conducted by the Senate of Serampore College.

**ATA PhD eligibility:** MTh from ATA with B plus, proficiency in the appropriate language for the field of study and sufficient ministerial experience.

Application Forms can be downloaded from the website: [www.ubs.ac.in](http://www.ubs.ac.in) (fee of Rs. 700/- applicable at the time of submission). The duly filled Application Form should be sent, before **15th February, 2021**, to: **Registrar, UBS, Behind Ramyanagri Society, Bibvewadi, Pune-411 037, Maharashtra, (India)**

**Email:** [admissions@ubs.ac.in](mailto:admissions@ubs.ac.in) / [registrar@ubs.ac.in](mailto:registrar@ubs.ac.in)  
**Tel.020-24211747 / 203 Extn. 340**



## **Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society**

### **Invites application for the post of the Director**

#### **Responsibilities of the Director:**

- The Director is the Chief Functionary of the Institute shall have the responsibility for general administration of the Institute.
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- The Director shall be responsible in mobilization of resources and control on accounts and programme expenditure.

**Age:** The applicant should be between 45 and 55 years of age.

**Term of Appointment:** The term of appointment is for 5 years and renewable for another term based on the appraisal.

#### **Qualifications:**

- A Postgraduate in Social Sciences or Theology from recognised University.
- Experience in Ecumenical Movements with a clear ecumenical vision, preferably having relationship with wider ecumenical organisations.
- Experience in administrative and financial management.
- Preference will be given to those who published their books and articles.

**Salary:** The existing salary scale is Rs.28,000 – 840-32,200-1120-37,800 New fixation of salary is due in April 2021.

The other permissible allowances will be offered as per the rules. Semi furnished three bedroom flat will be provided in Bangalore.

The applicants should send their applications with credentials along with the relevant documents including an endorsement from their churches and institutions of which he/she belongs.

***Those who applied earlier need not apply.***

The last date to receive the application is **30th January 2021**

The application should be addressed to:  
The Most Rev. Dr. P.C. Singh  
President, Christian Institute for the  
Study of Religion and Society,  
73, Millers Road, Benson town,  
Bangalore 560046 Email: cisrsblr@gmail.com

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